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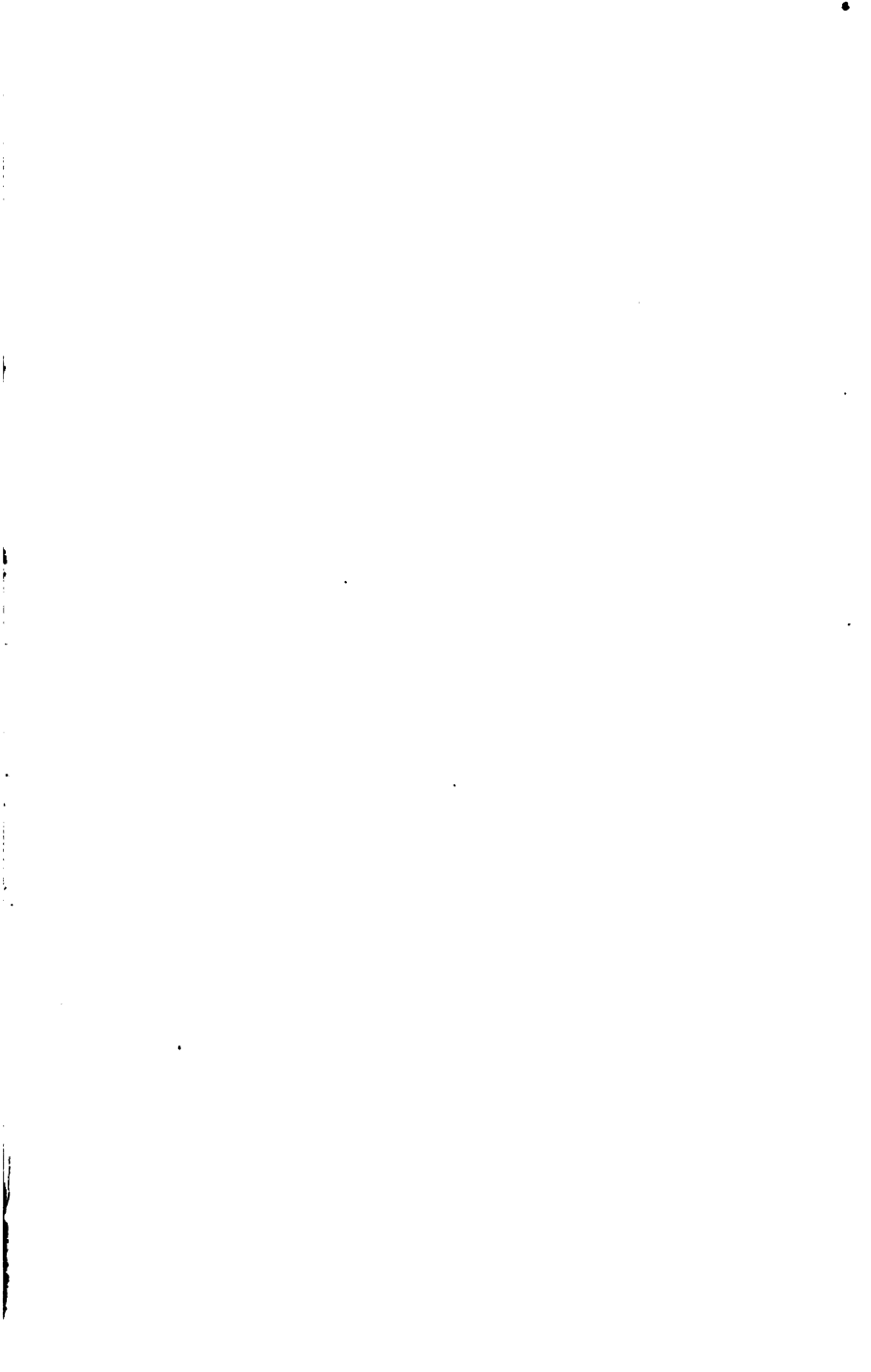
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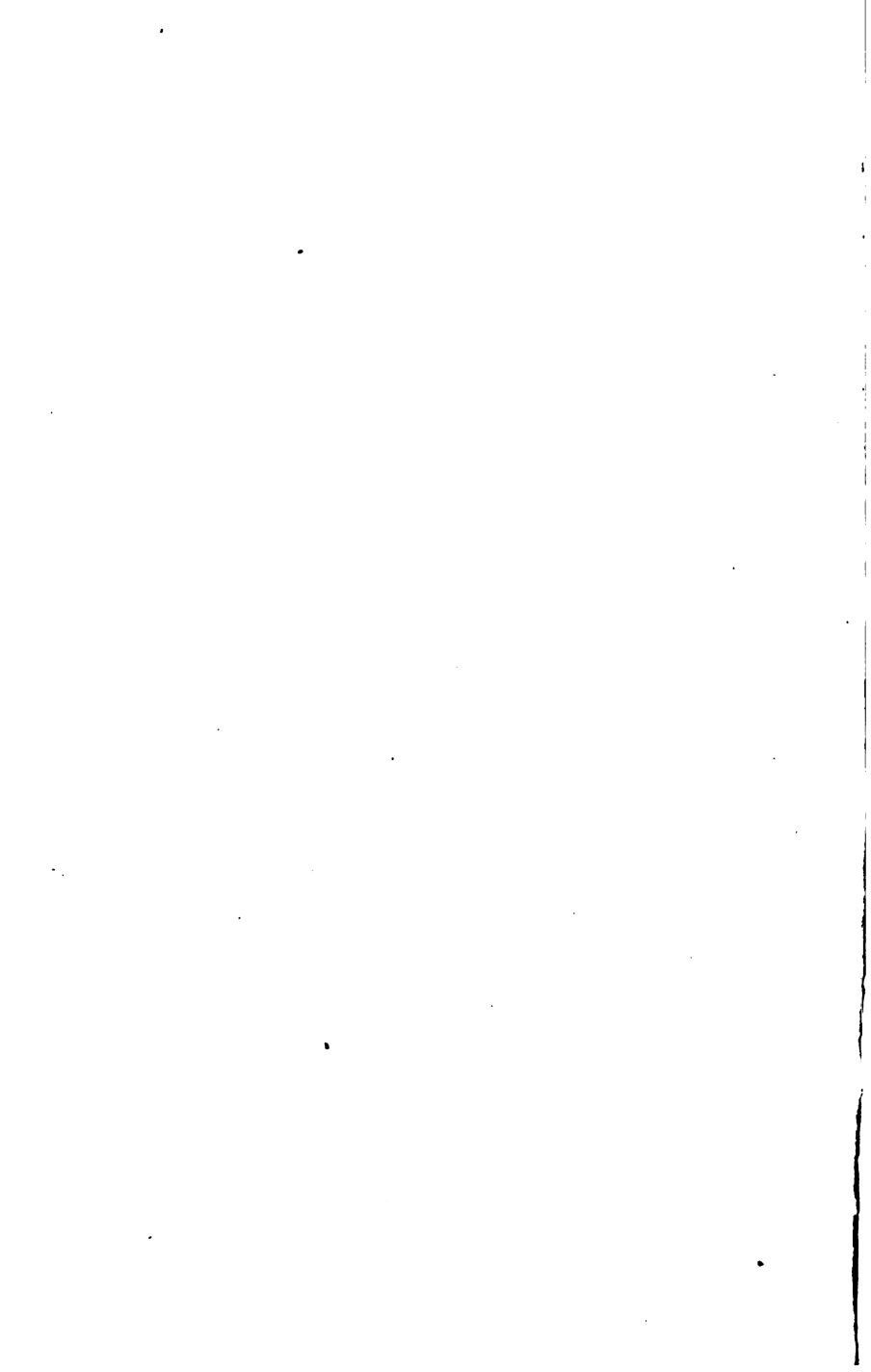
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THE  
HISTORY OF GERMAN SONG

AN ACCOUNT OF THE

Progress of Vocal Composition

IN GERMANY

FROM THE TIME OF THE MINNESINGERS TO THE  
PRESENT AGE, WITH SKETCHES OF THE LIVES  
OF THE LEADING GERMAN COMPOSERS.

—BY—

LOUIS C. ELSON.

—  
BOSTON:

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC.

1888.



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—TO—

**Robert Franz,**

THE LAST OF THE GREAT TRIUMVIRATE OF GERMAN

SONG COMPOSERS,

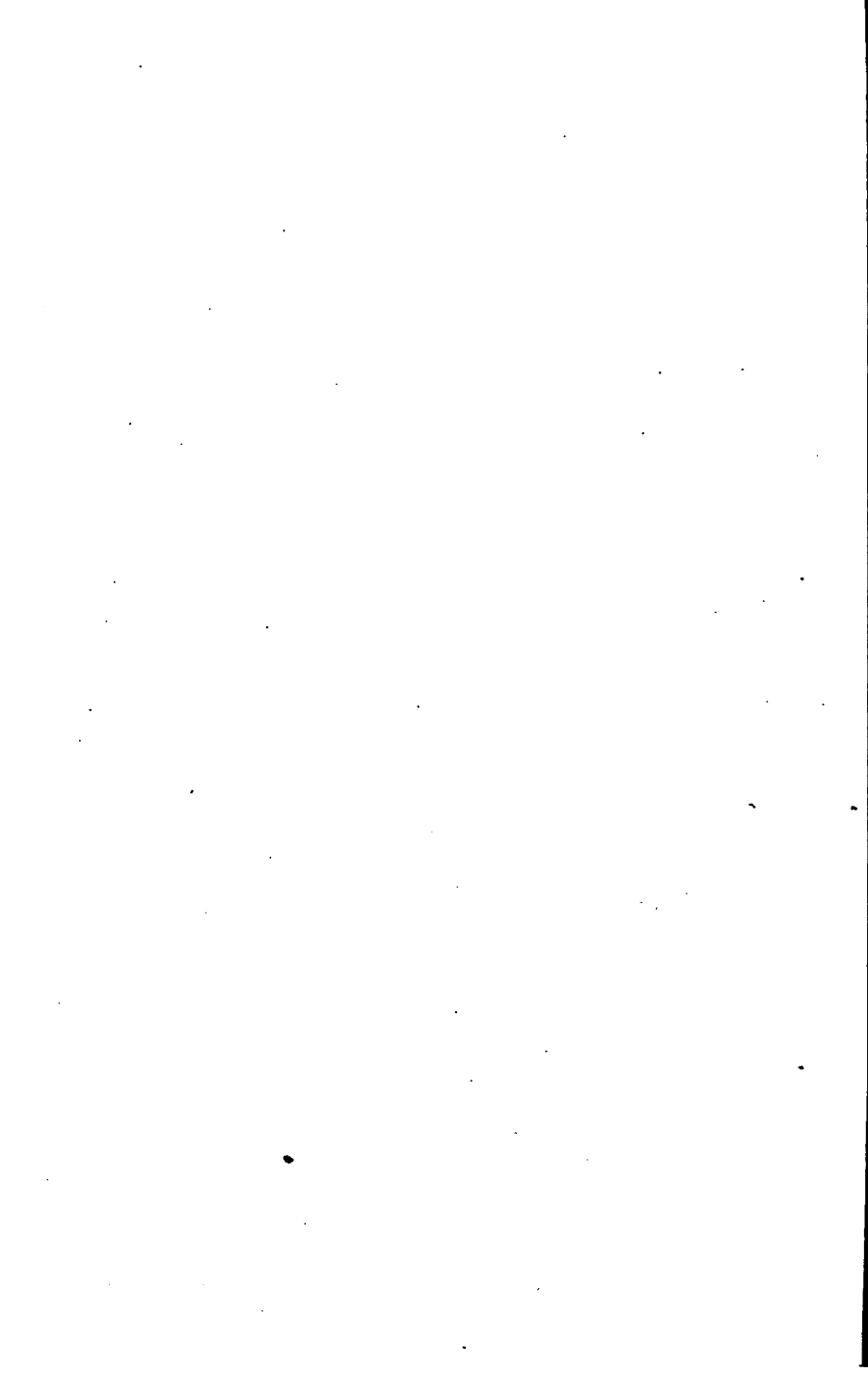
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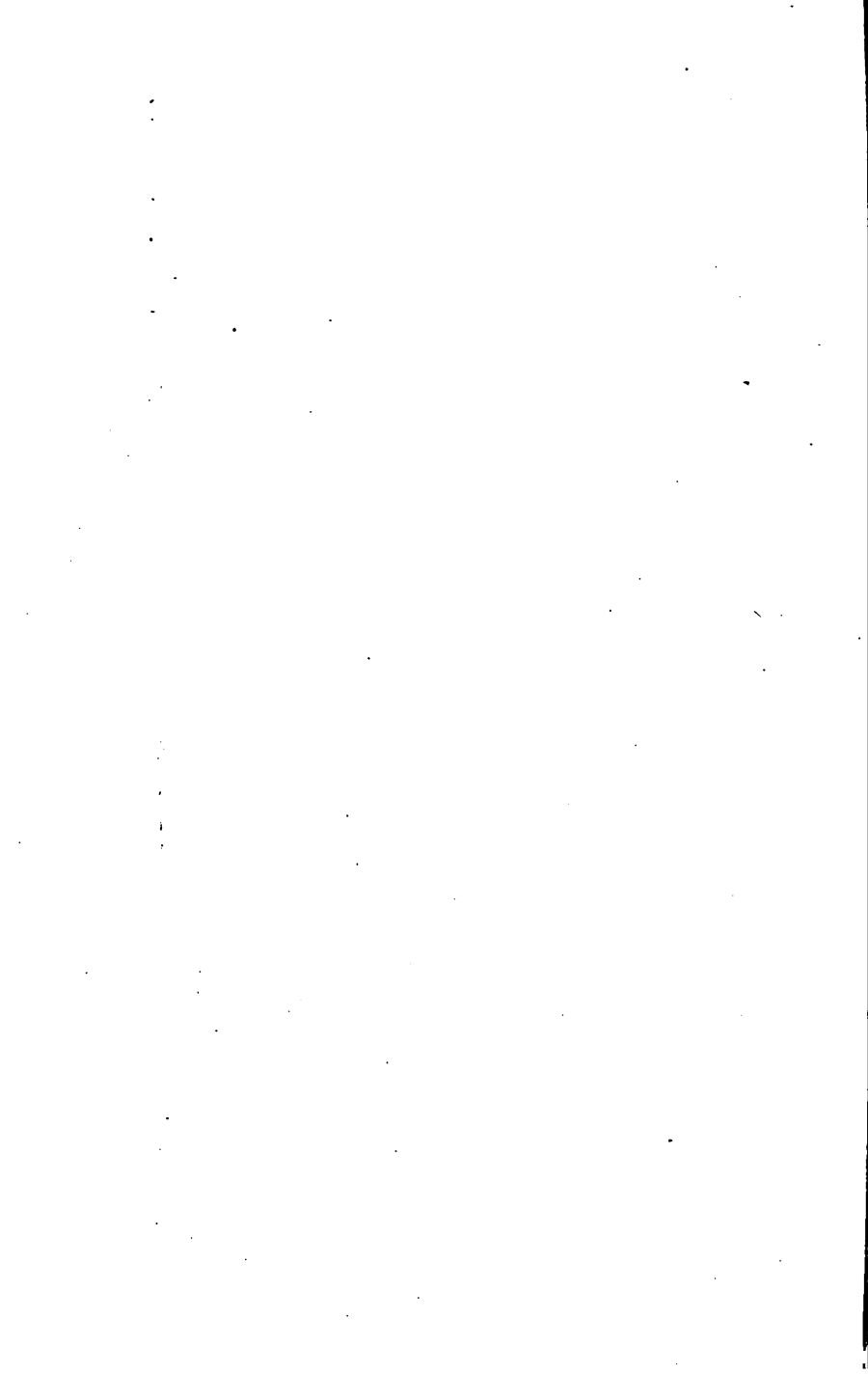
LOUIS C. ELSON.



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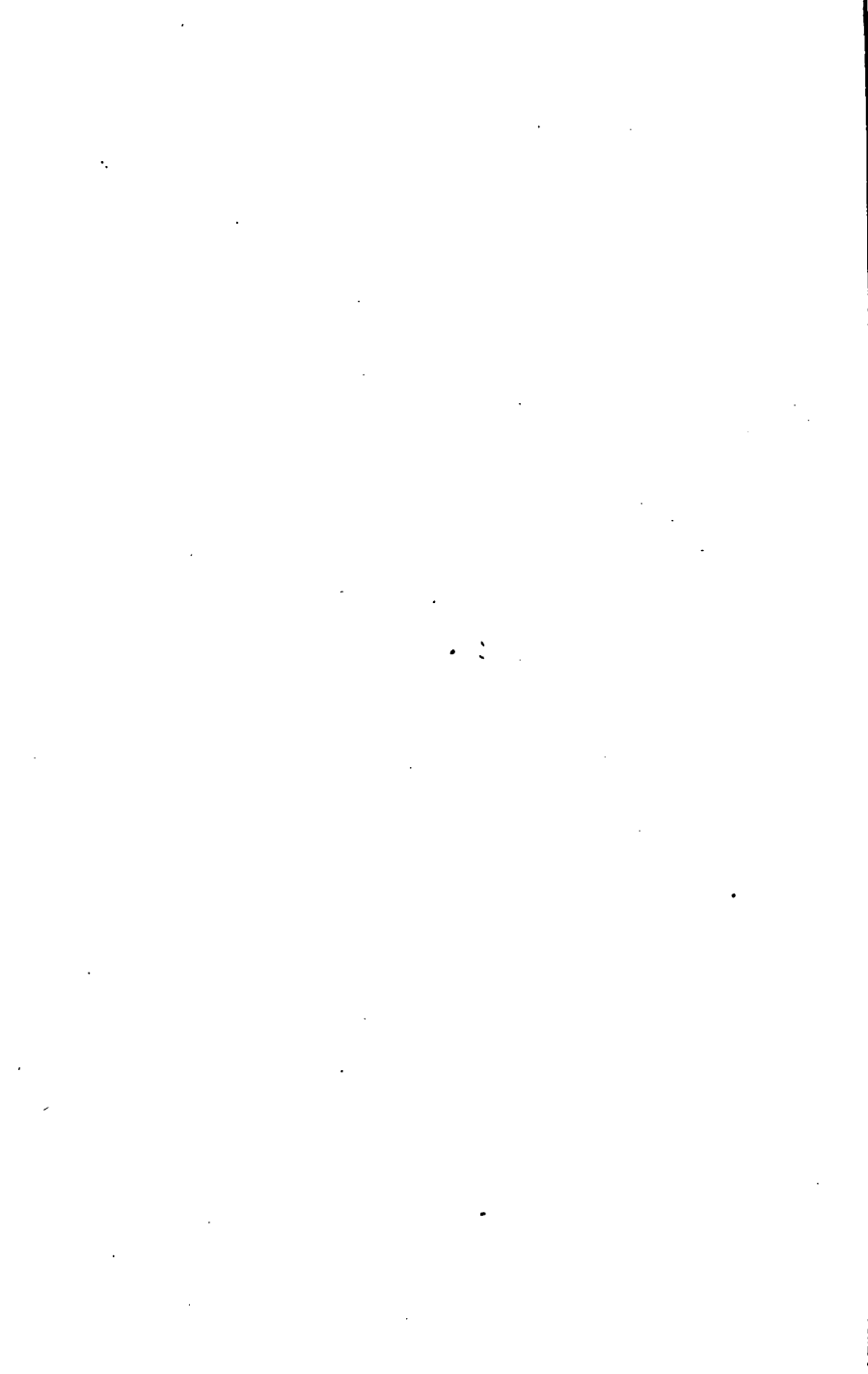


## PREFACE.

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The claims of Germany in the domain of instrumental music, have been so thoroughly and universally recognized, that the labors of her composers in the field of vocal music have been somewhat over-shadowed by them. Without in the least detracting from the great achievements of Italian masters in vocal work, I have endeavored in these pages to set forth what the Germans have accomplished in the same branch, and, as German song has closely intertwined itself with all Teutonic musical life, I venture to hope that this volume may become a condensed record of the general reforms and improvements which have taken place in musical art throughout Germany, from the earliest historical times.

LOUIS C. ELSON.



# THE HISTORY OF GERMAN SONG.

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## I.

### JONGLEURS AND MINNESINGERS.

THE history of the vocal music of Germany is, in some respects, a peculiar one, and full of interest; for it extends back, almost in an unbroken line, for over six hundred years. The songs of Italy, at least so far as regards secular music, sprang into prominence in the great epoch which gave birth to the Italian opera, about the year 1600: the songs of France sprang up sporadically, with this or that revolution or war; but in no country have the ancient beginnings of vocal composition been so carefully garnered up as in Germany, and in no land have the old works so practical a significance.

The reason of this is not far to seek. In the first place, the German in all times has been a singer, and his songs have always been interwoven in his daily life. Secondly, while in other countries the popular and classical schools of composition were kept sepa-



rate and had nothing in common, in Germany, after the eleventh century, no such distinction was made, but the music which sprang from the people was used by the most learned composers, and the skilful works of the higher school were accepted and cherished by the people. So inherent was this instinct of popular song that the system of congregational hymns was flourishing in Germany even in the Catholic days preceding the Reformation.

The sturdy root from which the German song had its rise must be sought for in the Minnesingers, those ancient minstrels who, noble by birth, took up the cause of music in a most inspired manner, and sang of love (*Minne*) and of the beauties of nature in a strain which bears comparison even with the works of our own times. Contemporary with the Troubadours and the Trouvères of France, they were yet much broader in thought and deeper in poetic feeling and expression. The Troubadours sang only the tender strains of amatory passion, the Trouvère was the mediæval novelist and playwright, but the Minnesinger was both of these in one, and, like the ancient Greek tragic poets, was both his own librettist and composer. Before the rise of the Minnesinger, music had but a single recognized mission,—the service of religion. It is true that there were secular songs in existence, and also secular musicians; but the latter were held in very slight esteem, and belonged to a

very low caste. They were called *Jongleurs*, or jugglers, and the modern word "juggler" takes its rise from their title; for they were travelling vagrants, who were ready to sing or play at any gathering, able to perform tricks of sleight of hand, and often eking out their slender income by exhibiting bears, monkeys, or other animals. The term "Joculator," or "Fun-maker," which was also applied to these wandering minstrels, shows that they were only clowns and jesters. But they were not only the musicians of the rustics, for as early as the eighth century we find writers savagely denouncing them, and reproving the nobility with giving money and entertainment to such strolling vagabonds. Poor wandering sons of the Muses! While the monastic musician taught his art in honored ease, they sang their love songs and gave their carols to a world which only tolerated them because they were amusing. They were at times even under the ban of the law, for edicts were issued by which they could be imprisoned for no offence save that they were "travelling" musicians and vagrants. This condition of secular music existed from the beginning of the eighth nearly to the end of the eleventh century. Now came the first great epoch in the music of Germany, and the Minnesinger gave to secular music a dignity which had previously been denied it. It is probable that the Troubadours of France gave rise to the movement, but it is certain

that the plant found firmer growth and better nurture on German soil.

The Minnesingers must not, however, be regarded merely as an offshoot of the Troubadours. Like the latter, they were noblemen, but, recognizing the fact that art knows no rank, they admitted persons of meaner estate to their numbers, if they gave evidence of musical genius. The Troubadour was often merely a composer, not a player or singer, and, as a consequence, frequently employed his humbler brother, the *Jongleur*, to play and sing his compositions. With the Minnesinger, this was not the case: he did not intrust the performance of his works to a second party, but cherished ability of execution equally with fertility of invention. As a consequence, contests of singers, such as Wagner has pictured in his *Tannhäuser*, sometimes occurred, the greatest of these taking place on the Wartburg, A.D. 1207.

In France there was a wide gap between the work of the noble musician and the songs of the people; but in Germany, already in these early days, the spirit of the folk-song was present in the compositions of this aristocratic order of musicians. The songs of the Troubadour were amatory: those of the Minnesinger were chivalric. The Troubadour praised the eyes, the hair, the lips, the form, of his chosen one: the Minnesinger praised the sweetness, the grace, the modesty, the tenderness, of the entire sex. The one was

concrete, the other abstract. The melodies of the Minnesingers were far different from the modern idea of a secular lyric. They resembled the chorale or the Gregorian chants somewhat, although at times one can find a dash and swinging rhythm in them, which suggest untrammelled spirits seeking a freer expression in music. Some of these, if properly harmonized and accompanied, would sound very agreeable, even to modern ears; but it must be borne in mind that the songs were not to be judged purely as music. In the time of the Minnesingers, poetry and music were indissolubly wedded; and the words could not be judged apart from the tune, nor the tune from the words. We give, on page 6, an example of one of the Minnesongs, which was written in praise of Rudolph of Hapsburg, about the year 1287.\*

The melody is so simple and symmetrical that it is easily accompanied with modern harmony, although, probably, it had but the crudest instrumental support originally. The playful and sudden turn of the poem, from deep homage to reproach for stinginess, at the end, is a touch worthy of Heine himself, and is much in the vein of that poet. In speaking of this part of our subject, we must add that direct pay was seldom given to the noble singers; but costly presents of cloaks, armor, horses, etc., were often received by them.

\*The notation of the manuscript is in the square notes of the time of Franco of Cologne. It has been modernized by Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik*, vol. ii., p. 253.



{ King Ru-dolph tru - ly prais - es God, With  
 { King Ru-dolph judg - es just and true, And



fer-vor all un - dy - ing, King Rudolph is a  
 hates all fraud and ly - ing, King Rudolph is a



ru - ler great of lof - ty fame and pow - er. }  
 he - ro too, of knights the ve - ry flow - er. }



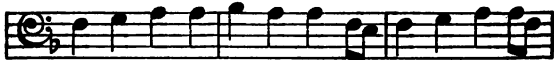
King Rudolph hon - ors wo - men too, Who



homage are de-serv-ing, And un - to God his



pray'rs ascend With comstant faith unswerving, King



Rudolph is a worthy king, All praise to him be



brought, He likes to hear the mas-ters play and



sing, But af-ter that he gives them naught.

The language in which their poems were written was the Swabian dialect, to-day a little-esteemed branch of the German tongue. It is odd to find complaints, even at the remote epoch of the rise of the Minnesingers, of the decline of music; but these complaints have existed in all ages of the world. The Chinese, five hundred years ago, lamented the decline of *their* music; the Greek philosophers bemoaned the fact that enervating melodies had driven out true art; Marcello, in 1704, wrote, "Music is declining"; Rameau, in 1760, exclaimed, "Music is lost"; to-day, we are told that the modern school has given music its death-blow. Therefore, we are not greatly astonished to find Henry of Veldig, at the close of the twelfth century, plaintively saying that the art of love-singing (for the word "Minne" meant the homage of love) was passing away, and are not even surprised to find the greatest of the Minnesingers coming on the scene some time after his death.

## II.

### CUSTOMS, MANNERS, AND INSTRUMENTS OF THE MINNE-SINGERS.

TO UNDERSTAND fully the musical and poetic epidemic which raged in Germany from about the years 1150 to 1300 A.D., it is well to study somewhat the daily life of the singers themselves. Their songs were sometimes rather above the comprehension of some of the rough nobility. Nevertheless, they sang on because of the spirit that was in them. A beautiful presentation of this feeling is left to us in one of the songs of Conrad of Würzburg, which we give in Taylor's translation :—

“ Unwilling stays the throng  
To hear the minstrel's song ;  
Yet cease I not to sing,  
Though small the praise it bring.  
E'en if on desert waste  
My lonely lot were cast,  
Unto my harp, the same,  
My numbers I would frame ;  
Though never ear were found  
To hear the lonely sound,  
Still should it echo round,  
As the lone nightingale

Her tuneful strain sings on  
To her sweet self alone,  
Whiling away the hour,  
Deep in her leafy bower,  
Where, night by night, she loves  
Her music to prolong,  
And makes the hills and groves  
Re-echo to her song."

This is a far nobler sentiment and truer appreciation of the scope of music than the remark of that would-be musician, the Emperor Nero, who said that "music unheard was valueless."

Naturally, however, such noble singers gradually elevated the standard of manners and morals. They were, in fact, the censors of that time, and fiercely satirized and condemned the faults of their epoch. In France the Troubadours, in Germany the Minnesingers, wrote books of etiquette both for ladies and gentlemen. Custom and the elegance of the courtly singers and knights gradually introduced a code of behavior which would astonish those who imagine those times as wholly barbarous. Here are a few points regarding ladies' demeanor: A lady ought not to march about with long and heavy strides; she ought not to swing her arms nor gesticulate vehemently with them; her glance modestly sinking to earth, not gazing around. Her mantle drawn around her to conceal her, she shall walk quietly about, lifting her dress somewhat, that it does not become dirty. To address



a stranger first was a great breach of etiquette; also, to sit cross-legged. Even to look at a stranger was forbidden by these stringent moralists (whose theory often went much beyond actual practice); but, if the man spoke to them, they might reply, courteously and not at much length.

"To speak with mouth full while you eat  
Is not considered very neat,"

says one of the old guides to behavior; and we must certainly agree with it.

"A maid may speak with gentle mien,  
But not too loud or bold, I ween,"

says the same authority.

If a man came suddenly into a room where ladies were assembled, these were to arise, greet him courteously, and then resume their seats.

The education of these ladies whom the Minnesingers celebrated in their poems was also a very good one. Naturally, cooking and sewing were the prosaic foundation, but surgery and medicine were also added; and the wounded knight always found a ready physician in the ladies of any castle where he might take refuge. Spite of all this gentleness,—of theory,—there was a certain amount of physical force in the actions of both men and women of the aristocracy of the time. A box on the ear, a thorough beating of an awkward servant, male or female, was thought nothing of.

For example, two noble sisters, disputing as to whether Lancelot is a knight or a merchant, the elder gives the younger so strong a box on the ear that the blood flows from her nose and mouth; and such arguments were not very uncommon.

It is certain that all the aristocracy of that time were cleanly, and that the bath was constantly used. It may also interest our fairer readers to know that the heroines of the songs of these early ages sometimes wore false hair. The aristocratic recreation of the epoch was chess, played nearly in the same manner as to-day.

Naturally, feasting was one of the great delights of the Minnesingers; and, at such feasts, music always played an important part. Sometimes, one singer would start a song; and all would join in the refrain. On such occasions, ladies also would occasionally allow their voices to be heard both in chorus and in solo.

The dance was at all times a welcome relaxation, but there was a wide distinction between the dances of the peasantry and those of the aristocracy. The "Hopaldei," or "Hop-up," belonged to the former class, and is well described by its name. Skirts flew high, and heads often knocked together with violence, during this rough capering. The "Reihen," or "row," was, on the contrary, a sedate and not ungraceful performance. The knights and ladies, in a long row, fol-

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... fiddlers and minstrels.  
The Minnesingers of  
the fourteenth century  
must have been  
of the same type as the  
Minnesingers of the  
thirteenth century. It  
is fierce and vehement  
in its manner, but it  
is a celebrated fiddle  
and the greatest of the  
age, but it must not be  
confined wholly to them.  
It offered a necessary part  
of the youth or maiden was  
and to be able to play upon  
and often, after a banquet,  
were expected to delight the  
abilities.

The time of the Minnesingers,  
we have already spoken of the  
they also possessed the harp,  
the fourteenth century already  
strings. There were many  
lutes as well as guitars. One  
akin to the hurdy-gurdy, was  
It was a large fiddle, to which  
was attached. This wheel was  
served instead of a bow to the

lowed their leader, and with dainty steps and pleasing gestures imitated each motion of the lady or knight at the head of the column. As they danced, they sang. Sometimes, the leader sang the melody; while the whole company of dancers gave the refrain. Sometimes, the chorus sang all the time. Many were the ballads which the Minnesingers composed for such occasions. The orchestra was crude enough at these dances. Sometimes, it was a few fiddlers only. Sometimes, a combination of drums, trumpets, fiddles, harps, and rotas, gave instrumental support to the song. The rota was not—as might be imagined from its name—a hurdy-gurdy, but a primitive zither with many strings, and played like a guitar. It was called rota, because of its round, wheel-like shape. The fiddles were also uncouth instruments, when compared with the violins of the last century and this. Nevertheless, they play an important part in the music of the Middle Ages. The fiddle certainly has an antiquity of at least eight hundred years; and the fiddles of the twelfth century were bowed almost exactly as those of to-day, even if their shape was somewhat different. They possessed from two to four strings, which (as is the case to-day) were tuned in fifths. In Germany, as many of our readers know, instrumental music received its greatest impetus through the custom of each prince supporting a Kapelle, or private orchestra. The origin of this custom dates back to these early days, and began with

the maintenance of bands of such fiddlers at different castles, to play for dancing. The *Nibelungenlied* alludes to such a band of twenty-four fiddlers, richly dressed. The playing was of the most violent description. At the peasants' dances, the fiddlers played until the strings or even the bow broke; and, even at the castle dances, the bowing was fierce and vehement, so that we have descriptions in the minnesongs of the fury and prowess of this or that celebrated fiddler. Of course, the Minnesingers were the greatest musicians of their time, in Germany; but it must not be supposed that music was confined wholly to them. Music was then, as now, considered a necessary part of a good education. Every youth or maiden was expected to learn singing, and to be able to play upon at least one instrument; and often, after a banquet, these high-born amateurs were expected to delight the guests by a display of their abilities.

Of the instruments of the time of the Minnesingers, full accounts are left. We have already spoken of the *rota* and the fiddle. They also possessed the harp, first with twelve, but in the fourteenth century already possessing twenty-five strings. There were many different varieties of harps as well as guitars. One instrument, somewhat akin to the hurdy-gurdy, was called the *organistrum*. It was a large fiddle, to which a wheel with a handle was attached. This wheel was rubbed with rosin, and served instead of a bow to the instrument.

Many varieties of flutes were used, possessing from three to eight finger-holes. The chalumeau, or shepherd's pipe, and also some sorts of a bagpipe were in use. Fétis imagines, also, that they possessed an oboe, which is more than probable, since instruments of the double reed family have existed in many portions of the world even since early Egyptian days. Horns were unquestionably used, especially in giving hunting and military signals. Whether the instrument called the busine was the predecessor of the trombone (German, Posaune) or of the bassoon may be considered a moot point; yet the weight of evidence goes to show that it was a brass or, at least, a metal instrument. Portable organs existed; and the larger organs had already become celebrated, probably coming originally from the East.\* Drums were used freely by the musicians of the Middle Ages, and also bells, tambourines, and other percussive instruments. The cymbals used at this epoch were afterward forgotten, and reintroduced from the East only during the last century. It is not astonishing to find Eastern and Southern instruments used in these early days, for it must be remembered that the constant pilgrimages and crusades made the mediæval knight better acquainted with these countries than the Meistersingers

\*In the ancient days, and especially in the first century, Alexandria sent many organs to Rome. It is possible that the art of organ-building, lost to Europe, may have been retained in less civilized countries through the Middle Ages.

were at a later date. Just as, to-day, the fashionable amateur is certain to study pianoforte, so the dilettanti of those times only studied the stringed instruments; but, naturally, every hunting nobleman was able to perform upon the horn.

The songs which the young singers learned to give at banquet or other festivities were generally tales set to music. It is an important fact that the true ballad,—or musical story,—which afterward had such popularity in England, Scotland, and Wales, is of Teutonic origin. The cultivated Greeks in ancient times had not perfected or even greatly used this form. In Oriental countries, the love of fiction or legend (supplied in our times by the novelist) was pandered to by the professional story-teller, who recited his numbers in prose. In ancient Germany and Scandinavia, however, the saga, or tale, became a poem, and was sung; and this taste, coming down through many centuries, was in full bloom in the time of the Minne-singers. Sometimes the travelling musicians (alluded to in our first chapter) made a pretty penny by singing just such songs; and a fine tale of a popular hero, well sung, was sure to reap a great reward, the guests at times becoming so enthusiastic that they would unbuckle their rich mantles and give them to the singer. Tales of the Holy Land, of Turk and Saracen, and foreign customs were not lacking; for did not many a pilgrim come by the castles, and was not each such



pious traveller made welcome with zealous hospitality? But the tales of these wanderers of the Middle Ages were in plain, unvarnished prose ; and they have therefore nothing to do with our subject. The tales with music were true legendary ballads, and give the history of Charlemagne or the deeds of Siegfried, the Teuton's delight, in heroic style. That the songs were not without musical form, even in the modern sense, may be judged by the example of music already given, which contains the germ of the minuet shape which has so largely influenced our own music.

### III.

#### FAMOUS MINNESINGERS AND THEIR WORKS.

WOLFRAM of Eschenbach, living during the last half of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, was, perhaps, the most remarkable of the band of poet musicians of his epoch. He was one of the participants in the remarkable contest of Minnesingers which took place at Wartburg, in 1207. He was youngest son of a Swiss nobleman, and was the *beau idéal* of the school of wandering minstrel knights. Not only do his works survive him, but his contemporaries are full of praise of his nature and capabilities; yet he was not so accomplished a musician as some of them, and songs were by no means his strongest point. Historical romance, on the other hand, seems to have best fitted his muse; and the larger part of the *Heldenbuch*, or book of heroes, is attributed to his pen. He was as bold as he was talented; and, in fact, all these early musical aristocrats were well skilled in feats of strength and arms.

The following verse, from one of the oldest songs of Scandinavian origin (preceding even the time of

our Minnesingers), may show what accomplishments were held in esteem: —

“ Eight things I know: at games to play;  
To carve with skill; in war to go;  
Through rising waves, I swim away;  
I ride with ease; the spear I throw;  
Across the ice, on skates, I glide;  
And I can row 'gainst any tide.”

Royalty was among the Minnesingers as it was among the Troubadours of France. The latter possessed Richard I., Alfonso X., and others; while the former enrolled Kaiser Heinrich, the son of Frederic Barbarossa, among their ranks.

Ulrich of Lichtenstein not only leaves to us some good specimens of the minnesong, but in his life gives an odd example of the calm manner in which the Minnesinger dedicated himself to some particular dame, whatever circumstances stood in the way. He existed in the middle of the thirteenth century. Petrarch never followed his Laura with more constant affection and versification than this knight did his unresponsive mistress. One warms toward this chivalric and persistent lover, until the lady begins to relent; and we learn, almost by way of parenthesis, that the noble Ulrich has a wife and good-sized family already. He leaves a full record of himself in a romance, or metrical essay, entitled *Frauendienst*, which may be translated ladies' service or homage. In apologizing for

the seeming egotism which causes him to speak so much of himself, he says : " My lady wished it so ; and what she wishes, that must I do. The book belongs to all worthy ladies."

Walther von der Vogelweide was also one of the great Minnesingers of his time, which was previous to that of the last-named knight, he having died about the year 1240. He is the heroic and warlike singer of the early epoch ; and it was fitting that he should be so, for he served under many banners. His life was that of the true knight-errant ; and he seems to have often wandered about on horseback, carrying along only his sword, fiddle, and harp. His patriotism was great, and he bursts into praise whenever he speaks of his own country. He says of himself that he has wandered through France, Austria, and Hungary, and seen many people and customs ; but

" German men have finest breeding,  
And German women angels are."

In his later years, he undertook the greatest journey of that age. He became a Crusader, and went to the Holy Land ; and some of his songs remain, as records of the life and manners of the Crusades. The most tender picture of all that the Minnesingers have left us, is this wanderer, after roaming over almost the entire world (as far as it was then known), returning, an old man, to his native province. His longing for the days gone by is as pathetic as if it

were written by any modern poet, and we believe that the poem to which he then gave utterance will recall the thoughts of some of our own celebrated poets to the minds of our readers. We attempt a free translation of it:—

Oh, where have fled the pleasant hours?  
Is all this real, or but a dream?  
The place that had such mystic powers  
All changed and altered now doth seem.  
Yes: it was sleep. I slept, and dreamed;  
And things have changed, while I slept on.  
The faces that once on me beamed,  
Ah! tell me whither they have gone,—  
My young companions, old and gray;  
The fields and woods are not the same;  
The stream flows on, no longer gay.  
Alas! that such change ever came!  
The very ones with whom I played  
Salute me now with manner cold.  
A few years all this change have made,  
The very earth seems growing old.

This plaintive sorrow of A.D. 1235 is, unfortunately, just as real in the nineteenth century, and will be in all centuries to come. The minstrel died soon after, and was buried in Wurzburg. His name of "Vogelweide," or Birdmeadow, may have come from his fondness of bird-catching; and a legend relates that he left orders to have birds fed daily over his grave. His coat-of-arms also contains a picture of two birds in a cage. It will be seen, by what has already been de-

scribed, that the Minnesingers tuned their lyres to other subjects besides that of love, although the latter was their chief theme, and was even personified by a goddess, Frau Minne, a much purer one than the Venus of the Greeks.

In the union of music and poetry, however, the old Germans were unconsciously copying the Hellenic idea.

Two species of their love songs must be alluded to. These were the "Dance Songs" and the "Watch Songs." We have already spoken of the style of the dances; and it only remains to add that the Minnesingers loved a gay and genial vein of expression, and frequently introduced a *Tanzweise* in more serious works, to lighten the general effect. Ulrich of Lichtenstein, for example, having lost his fortune, begins a lament, but suddenly adds,—

"My lady, though, she smiled on me,"

and breaks forth in a dance rhythm.

The "Watch Songs" were ballads in which the sentinel of the lady's castle was introduced as a character. Sometimes, the singer pleads with him to relax his vigilance, and allow him to slip in and see his lady fair. Sometimes, the watchman is a friend, who, having admitted the knight in secret, sings words of caution and warning, heralding, perhaps, the approach of dawn or of the lady's husband or guardian. At times,

the watchman sings to the lady, announcing that her knight is near. Two specimens may suffice of these songs, a single verse of each giving sufficient clew to their general scope : \* —

“ I heard, before the dawn of day,  
 The watchman loud proclaim :  
 ‘ If any knightly lover stay  
 In secret with his dame,  
 Take heed : the sun will soon appear.  
 Then fly, ye knights, your ladies dear.  
 Fly ere the daylight dawn.’ ”

The second begins as follows : —

“ The sun no more is gleaming ;  
 The moon its light is bringing ;  
 The night has come, with dreaming ;  
 The nightingale is winging,  
 And sweetly soft is singing.  
 Then sang the watchman, low :  
 ‘ If any knight be sighing,  
 For lover’s meeting trying,  
 He shall not have denying.  
 Unto her let him go.’ ”

In closing our chapters relative to the Minnesingers, we must of course speak of that great historical event which occurred at the very climax of this musical period, the Singers’ War, or the contest of the Minnesingers at the Wartburg, about 1207. There is some

\* The first is taken from Taylor’s *Lays of the Minnesingers*. The second we have translated from Görres’s collection.

doubt as to whether such a contest really took place at all, in consequence of the large amount of fiction with which the succeeding poets have embellished it. It is, however, certain that Hermann, the munificent Landgrave of Thuringia, drew to his court a large number of Minnesingers, who prized his princely hospitalities so highly that they even left the Suabian dialect, in which their songs had before that been composed, and wrote in the Thuringian, thus beginning the separation which took place between the High German and Low German literature of the latter part of the Middle Ages. That competitions took place at his court is more than probable, and was quite in keeping with the customs of the time. It must be remembered that France enjoyed similar contests among the Troubadours, in which discussions concerning some point of homage to ladies took place, and which were called "Courts of Love." It is not unlikely that the War of the Wartburg was an occasion of this order, and Wagner has followed out this idea in his opera of *Tannhäuser*. But the poems relating to the combat became hyperbolic in such a large degree that some commentators have — we think, unjustly — relegated the entire combat to the domain of mythology. The following is one of these florid accounts: —

Henry, the virtuous clerk, Walther von der Vogelweide, Bitterolf, Reinmar, Von Ofterdingen, and Wolf-



ram von Eschenbach were the participants; and the Landgrave and others were to be the judges. The prize was to be adjudged to the best singer and composer, and the worst was to be at once taken out and hung. [This latter feature at once proves the version to belong to later and more brutal times.] Henry of Ofterdingen was the best; but his rivals conspired that he should be judged the worst, and he was given over to the hangman, but escaped by force, and fled to Austria in search of the great enchanter, Klingsor, who, on hearing him, commended his singing, and proposed to go back with him for another competition. The two passed their time very pleasantly together; but finally, by his magic, Klingsor had them both transported in a night to the palace in Thuringia. Here Klingsor entered into competitive singing with Wolfram von Eschenbach, without, however, gaining any superiority, after which he substituted one of the evil spirits at his command in his place. Wolfram was equal to the emergency, and began to sing a song about the holy sacraments, which at once sent the disgusted imp flying. But, in the evening, the magician won the contest by introducing the topic of astrology; and Wolfram was entirely discomfited. Klingsor left the hall loaded with presents, and departed the next day.

What wonder if, amid such tales as these, the entire story should be doubted? Nevertheless, as we have

already seen, there was a substratum of truth in it all; and after one subtracts Klingsor, his imps, and the hangman, there still remains the fact that at the court of Thuringia was the climax of that poetic and noble epoch of German chivalry represented by the works and lives of the Minnesingers.

## IV.

### THE MASTERSINGERS.

WITH the passing away of the Minnesingers, the German song fell upon evil days. The nobility abandoned their interest in the art of poetry and composition, and the burghers entered the field. For nearly three centuries, a lower order of composition, a weaker vein of music, ruled in Germany. It is difficult to assign an exact epoch to the change. The Mastersingers claim Wolfram of Eschenbach and Walther von der Vogelweide as the founders of their order; while, on the other hand, Frauenlob\* is reckoned by some historians as a Mastersinger, and by others as the last of the Minnesingers. There is some truth in both theories, for he existed between the two epochs. His death at Mainz, in 1318, marks the end of the loftiest poetical epoch of the Middle Ages. The women of the time were not ungrateful to the poet who had spent his life in praising their sex; and we read that his body was borne to the grave by women only, attended by a large procession of weeping

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\*This singer's name was Henry of Meissen; but his constant homage to women won him the title of "Frauenlob," or "Women's-praise."

females, who threw roses into the grave and poured libations of wine into it until it overflowed.

After this, the German Muse fell into a prolonged sleep. It was quite natural that, as the Mastersingers had not the high poetic thoughts of their predecessors, the Minnesingers, they should try to elevate form above inspiration. Their entire attention seemed given to the invention of new metres and shapes. The era at which the Mastersingers arose may be set as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century. They at once began forming themselves into societies, guilds, and corporations, bound by various whimsical laws, and consenting to many formalities of construction and rhythm in poetry and music, which clearly marked the absence of a true understanding of the subject. There were at first still a few bold spirits remaining who chose to take the freer methods and life of the Minnesingers; but these soon gave way to the organized pressure of the Mastersingers, and very soon all German song composition was bound hand and foot. With the *Meister*, the spirit of competition became much more keen than it had been in the Minnesinging days. The knightly musicians were satisfied with the mere work of art creation, or, at the most, with the applause of a chosen dame. Their coarser-grained successors desired that the whole world should echo the plaudits, and that their excellence should be formally acknowledged.

The contests of the Meistersingers were always given with great pomp and circumstance. Wagner, in his opera, the *Meistersingers of Nuremberg*, has reproduced the festivity of such an occasion with much fidelity; and it may not be generally known that even the names of his characters are exact, since Hans Sachs, Veit Pagner, Sixtus Beckmesser, and others, are chronicled among the twelve great masters in Nuremberg in 1550. There are many points of resemblance between the ceremonials of the Mastersingers and the Masons of modern times. There were even degrees among the former, and the title "master" meant that one had risen by attainments from the humbler rank of apprentice. The regular meetings of the guild generally took place on the afternoons of Sundays or of holidays, as the singers worked at their trades on other days. At the large competitions, the following rules were observed: Behind a green curtain of silk sat four *Merker*, or critics, whose business it was to watch the singer and mark down any mistakes which he made. Each of these critics had a special department. One was to judge of the language and grammar of the singer. In later years, this *Merker* had before him an open copy of Luther's translation of the Bible, as the best standard of the German tongue. Another was to watch the contents of the song, and see if it contained worthy and learned thoughts. Another was to observe the construction and metre of the verse,

and see if it conformed to the *Meistersinger* rules. The other was to watch the music, and see if it was properly composed and performed. Regarding the last two critics, we may add that their task was a most important one. The versification of the singers was often very complex, and each metre had given to it a name taken from heraldry or from war. Thus, one reads in the early chronicles of the "shield," the "sword," the "thrust," the "parry" of a song. To invent a new mode of versification was the singer's greatest glory; and, if it were accepted by the judges, he was allowed to give it a name. In this manner arose the "rosemary," the "flowery-paradise," the "fresh," the "yellow," the "blue," the "frog," and the "mirror" modes. Some verses even exist with *one hundred and twenty-two rhymed lines* in each. Our readers can imagine how much of inspiration there could have been in such a mechanical jingle.

As to the music, the singer was left somewhat more free. It was set down to his credit, if he invented his own song; but he was allowed to take his tunes ready-made, if he wished. And for this purpose there were several "official melodies" furnished by the society, to any of which he might set his poem. The singer sat upon a raised stool while performing; and every adjunct of the scene gave it a pedagogic character, not unlike a college examination. The chief faults were enumerated in the laws of the society. There were

thirty-two of these. The following are a few of them : The singer was forbidden to employ sentences which nobody could understand,—a wise rule where there was so much of pedantry. He was also forbidden to use words which had no meaning. He was not allowed to make gestures or grimaces. Indistinctness of pronunciation was a fault; singing off the pitch was reckoned a great fault; and over-embellishment, strange to say, was also a fault, and produced “black marks.” The prize given to the winner was sometimes a crown, but more usually a scarf or long chain and a medal. The second prize was a wreath. The subjects of the songs at the “free singings” were left to the singer, and on such occasions any might participate; but, at the great competitions, none but members could take part, and the subjects (after the Reformation) were to be taken wholly from the Scriptures. A singer who had won a prize was at once accorded the rank of *Meister*; and, at the next competition, he was entitled to a seat among the judges. At the great competitions, the singer was compelled to know his song by heart, as no book or prompting was allowed him. If he strayed altogether from the tune, the judges at once ordered him to stop.

Only one important poet was produced by the Mastersingers during the centuries of their existence. This was Hans Sachs, born at Nuremberg in 1494. He studied at the free school in his city, and says

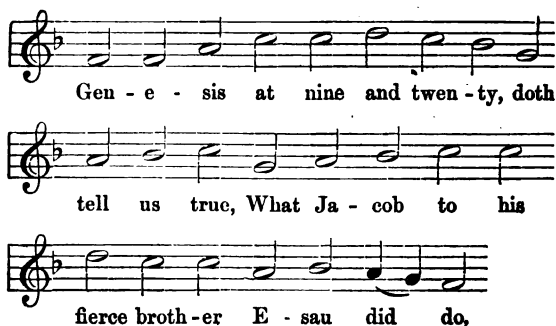
of himself that he was not thoroughly educated. His father was a tailor; and Hans, at the age of fifteen, also took up a trade, that of shoemaking. At this time, a friend of the family, a weaver named Nunnenbeck, taught the youth the principles which governed Mastersinging; and, after he had gone through the customary *Wanderjahre*, he settled at Nuremberg again, and was admitted with honor into the society of singers. Probably no poet achieved more honor during his lifetime than the humble cobbler-rhymester of Nuremberg. He died in 1576, leaving behind him three enormous folios of printed works; but even these do not give all his literary labors, for he wrote over six thousand pieces, some of them long plays of seven acts each. The reason that Sachs won so much more fame than his brother singers is that he alone was *genuine*; for, spite of his observance of the pedantic rules of his time, he did not permit them to stifle his own hearty, good-humored nature. There is a *bonhomie* in his works which even to-day makes them pleasant reading, and forces the reader to join in the evident enjoyment of the poet in relating his tale.

The last vestiges of the Mastersingers did not disappear until this century, when, in 1839, the last four of the Ulm Meistersingers turned over their records, banners, etc., to the singing society of that town, thus completing the existence of the guild which had



existed since the Middle Ages. It was a typical act, for out of the Mastersingers' guild has grown the German *Maennerchor*. Gregarious singing is not less existent among the Teutonic people than it was in the early times of Frauenlob or Sachs: it has only changed its form.

In leaving this branch of our subject, we present a specimen of the Scriptural introduction to one of the old competitive songs.



It was not sheer pedantry which led the singer thus to announce where his subject was to be found. We must remember that there was behind the green curtain a *Merker*, with an open Bible before him; and, if this gentleman was ignorant of the singer's text, the chances were that he would receive a few very damaging marks for tampering with Scriptural correctness.

## V.

### THE FOLK-SONG.

THE influence of the Minnesingers reached down to the Mastersingers, and that of the Mastersingers permeated the taste of the general public in these early days ; but in Germany, as elsewhere, the folk-song had also an independent existence. It would be most interesting, were it but possible, to trace the early folk-songs of Europe, as they sturdily arose in spite of, and often in opposition to, classical or pedantic laws. It is almost certain that, while the ancient Greeks hampered their music with rigid rules and an unwieldy nomenclature, the peasants sang pleasant minor melodies, and knew not that they were transgressing canons of art. King Canute was not a musician ; yet he was able to give England a folk-song which existed for centuries, because he gave free utterance to a spontaneous musical thought. In this case, the origin of the song was known, because it was such a lofty one ; but the workman at his bench, or the soldier on the march, could produce a song in the same spontaneous way, and years after, its rise might be sought for in vain.

That Germany possessed many such songs is not to be doubted, for this country was especially noted for the delight which its people took in chorus singing. This was so marked a characteristic that even the Church was obliged to yield to it, and congregational singing was permitted in the Catholic ritual in Germany, while jealously prohibited in other countries. This ecclesiastical singing took the form of *Marienlieder*, songs in praise of the Virgin, which were incorporated in the service. These songs were sometimes rather secular in their style; or rather, in Germany at this time, the difference between sacred and secular music was not a very marked one. To the secular music (the folk-song) is due much of the power of the Protestant music of the country, and it has been well observed that the Teutonic folk-song equalled in its power and results even the Gregorian chant. It was a melodious protest against the complex and bewildering system of the Mastersingers. It was the very wild flower of music, springing up by the wayside; and doubly attractive because of its mystic origin. The praise of woman, which was so great a characteristic of the Minnesong, was carried forward in the *Marienlieder*, in which the Holy Virgin was invested with every lovely attribute, and became the type of true womanhood. But these were only one kind of the folk-songs of the epoch beginning with the fourteenth century; there were also love-songs, battle-songs, and vocal descriptions of com-

bats, drinking-songs, dance-songs, wanderers' songs,\* children's songs, knights', students', and hunters' songs, — an entire *répertoire*, giving expression to many widely differing emotions, and some of the works possessing a rich vein of humor, which seems to have been a characteristic of certain folk-songs in different ages and climes.

Another feature of the folk-song in Germany, as elsewhere, was the frequent use of the refrain,—a repetition of words, apparently without meaning, at the end of the various verses, or sometimes even between each line. The various refrains of folk-songs and ballads would make a most interesting subject for philologists and antiquarians to investigate; for these refrains seem to come down from very ancient days, and are found even among some barbaric races. The Maoris of New Zealand, for example, have long refrains in words which they themselves do not understand, but which they assert have come down to them from their remote ancestors. The Indians of Canada, when first met by the early Jesuits, sang a refrain which sounded very much like "Alleluia," and which immediately led the pious fathers to imagine that they had discovered the lost tribes of Israel. The English refrain of "Derry down," or "Hey, Derry down," is said to have been originally a druidical charm. Naturally, some of these

\*The "wandering years" have always constituted a definite epoch in German life. Every youth was expected to finish his years of apprenticeship with a certain amount of travel, generally on foot.

refrains bear immediate evidence that they are only a meaningless jingle, meant to piece out the words and melody. "Fackelorum, dideldorum," or "Dudel, didel, dum," probably had no more meaning in the old German songs than "Tra, la, la" in the ancient and modern English ones. Reissmann, the eminent commentator on German music, seems to imagine that in some cases the refrains were ignorant imitations of the responses used in the ritual of the Church. Although the Church was obliged to use the folk-song to some extent, the latter did not always return the compliment by using the ecclesiastical style of composition, the Gregorian tones. On the contrary, the first true departure from the Gregorian system is found in the ancient popular melodies.

That there is at times considerable variation in different versions of the same song is to be expected, where the songs were preserved only by oral teaching. In Russia, one finds important points of difference in national melodies, as sung in St. Petersburg, from the same airs as sung in Moscow; and just such points of difference were to be found in songs sung in North and South Germany. But the folk-songs of Germany are not to be compared in their contents with those of Russia or of any other country. The folk-song, more than any other vehicle, brings to us the spirit of an epoch or of a people, and is therefore always *sui generis*. The English peasantry, for example, sang in major modes

while almost all the other races of Europe sang in minor,—a typification of the merry and hearty character of the singers. The mournful resignation of the Russian, the vivacity of the Frenchman, the excitable and frenzied nature of the Spaniard, are all clearly reflected in the folk-music; and, in a like manner, the folk-songs bring to us the calmer and more contemplative style of the German of centuries ago, who seems to have had the same phlegmatic, yet earnest nature, as his descendants.\*

Among the earliest of the German folk-songs were ballads,—tales of war,—while war was the chief occupation of the people. Religion and drinking represent the vices and virtues of the ancient German peasantry; and the drinking-songs, therefore, were not much fewer in number than the *Marienlieder*. Long before Luther's time, the church musicians saw how thoroughly the spirit of the people was in all the secular music, and used some of the baser tunes for religious purposes. Many masses were built upon this or that popular love-song, and even drinking-songs were thus put to holy use. The mass generally, in such a case, took the name of the song on which it was

\* Fletcher of Saltoun, in 1703, said, "I knew a very wise man who believed that, if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation." This tribute to the power of the folk-song is so often misquoted that we are tempted to give it here. It occurs in a letter to the Marquis of Montrose; and the "wise man" referred to is thought to have been Sir Philip Sidney, with whom, therefore, the thought probably originated.

founded; \* and often one composer would endeavor to outdo the other in ingenious treatment of such melodies.

With the beginning of the art of music-printing, † the folk-song had a more definite history; and it is pleasant to know that many of the earliest printed works in Germany were collections of folk-songs. Some collections had previously been made in manuscript, and of these the Limburg *Chronicle* (of the fourteenth century) is the most valuable. These collections are intensely interesting to the musician and antiquary, and sometimes show the German geniality in a very quaint manner. We give, for example, a translation of the verses which are printed on the different voice parts of an ancient set of songs:—

*Discant (upper part):*

“Ye little youths and maidens neat,  
We want your voices high and sweet:  
Your study to the discant bring,  
The only part that you should sing.”

*Alto:*

“The alto suits to nice young men  
Who can sing up, and down again:  
This surely is the alto’s way,  
So study at it night and day.”

\* The same fact was true of ancient French music. A certain very ancient song, entitled “L’Homme Armé,” was so well adapted to contrapuntal treatment that dozens of the old composers used it in their masses, and these works were called “L’Homme Armé Masses.”

† Music-printing dates back to 1473, and possibly earlier.

The tenor has the following : —

“ In middle path are all my arts,  
I sing against the other parts :  
They lean on me throughout the song,  
Or else the singing would go wrong.”

The bass is more humorous : —

“ My station is a lower lot ;  
He who to middle age has got,  
And growleth like a bear so hoarse,  
Why, let him sing the bass, of course.”

Not only did the writers of church music greatly employ the folk-song (of which more hereafter), but the lute-players and the pipers often arranged the melodies for instrumental performance. The lute-players often took many liberties with the tunes in transcribing them, and seem to have been as ornate in their disguising of melodies as some of our modern pianists in the treatment of operatic themes. Naturally, it would be beyond possibility in so short a work as this to illustrate all the different species of folk-song. We content ourselves with a single specimen of the lyric school (taken from Lange's Collection).

The vocal forms, however, were but one of the influences which, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, moulded German music. Instrumental forms began to arise, and to wield an important power upon the music, not only of Germany, but of the whole world.



## SUNSHINE.

*Moderato.**p*

Shine for us, love-ly sun - - - light, Let

The first system of the musical score for 'Sunshine'. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major, 4/4 time, and begins with a piano (p) dynamic. The lyrics 'Shine for us, love-ly sun - - - light, Let' are written below the vocal line. The piano accompaniment is in the same key and time, with a piano (p) dynamic. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand.

... your ..... rays dance in glee! ..... And

The second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics '... your ..... rays dance in glee! ..... And'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand.

shine us two to - geth - - - er, to - geth - er, Who

The third system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'shine us two to - geth - - - er, to - geth - er, Who'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand.

*cres.* *dim.*  
side by side would be, Who side by side would be. ...  
*dim.*  
*cres.*

## VI.

### THE INSTRUMENTAL FORMS.

ALTHOUGH our subject is the vocal music of Germany, it is impossible to examine the songs of the different epochs without studying the instrumental forms which often gave rise to them. The dances especially are so interwoven with singing that the two arts seem to belong to each other in the folk-music. The most ancient dances of Germany were of two kinds, those which belonged to the court and aristocracy, and those which were the delight of the burghers and the peasantry. The former were always slow and stately, and involved no indecorous gesture or action: the latter were wild, jumping, and full of activity. This broad division of dancing is by no means solely the property of the Germans: it has probably been in existence in all ages. We have already alluded to the difference of courtly and popular dances in the time of the Minnesingers, but we can go back even to ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt for similar distinctions.\* The ancient dances of cere-

\*For excellent details regarding the epochs of the dance, we refer the reader to Czerwinski's *History of the Dance*.

mony (as, for example, those mentioned in the Scriptures) were probably not even marching, but a merely pantomimic action. That many of the Greek dances did not involve motions of the feet is proved by the descriptions of the actions of the tragic choruses, left in many of the works of contemporary writers, while Lucian\* proves conclusively that the great Roman dancers were pantomimists, and did not caper about, but relied wholly upon gesture and movement of the hands. In later times, we find the court dances more allied to gesture than to caperings, although the body was no longer kept stationary, but moved gracefully about in time with the rhythm. Such dances as the Passacaglia, the Chaconne, the Pavane, the Minuet, represented the loftier side of the saltatory art in Southern and Central Europe in the past; while the Gigue, the Hornpipe, the Bourrée, or the Musette represented the heartier rustic side. In Germany, the courtly dances were often combined with song; and the knight would take a lady by the hand, and, singing and stepping gracefully to the rhythm of the lute, the pair would move slowly to and fro. Sometimes, the gentleman was allowed two partners in such a dance. These were called the "stepped dances," and the name itself proves the difference from the modern society dances. On the other hand, the people's dancing was ruder and wilder. It was divided into two kinds, the "circling" and the "springing" dance.

\*"De Saltatione."

The former was the more reputable of the two, and could not have been very different from the old English Maypole dance; but the springing dance, of which the Hopaldei, spoken of in Chapter II., was the predecessor, was a very rough exercise; and the throwing down of the female participants was not infrequent, and often occasioned the calling out of the city guards to preserve order, and only too frequently the dance would end in a bloody fight. Singing was combined also with these uncouth merrymakings, and many a folksong owes its origin to some satirical verses sung on these occasions to the dance tune. Of the instruments which accompanied these dances, the drum was the most prized; but it was soon taken from the dances of the lower classes, and allowed only to the gatherings of the nobility. The trumpet and drum during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were deemed to be the only two instruments which a gentleman might delight in and even perform upon. Many were the laws regulating the use of these two instruments. It was regarded as an especial token of graciousness when, in 1426, the Emperor Sigismund permitted the city of Augsburg to establish a band of trumpeters. Trumpeters and drummers were under the immediate jurisdiction of their prince, and had many privileges and were highly honored. In 1623 and in 1630, decrees were issued fixing their station and defining their rights.\* One of the most curious of the laws regarding

drummers, and one which shows how highly the instrument was regarded, existed in Saxony at the beginning of this century. Drums were forbidden to be used at any dance or ball, unless some person of noble rank or academical degree were present. This relic of the legislation of the Middle Ages did not cause any serious inconvenience, for it was very easy to obtain the attendance of some penniless professor, and with him the desired drums. The kings of Poland kept twelve court trumpeters and two drummers.

Space forbids giving the various laws which surrounded the two arts, a full collection of which may be found in a curious work, entitled *Introduction to the Heroic Musical Trumpeter's and Drummer's Art* (Anleitung zur heroisch-musikalischen Trompeter und Pauker Kunst), by J. E. Altenburg; \* but the fact may be regarded as entirely established that, while the harp and fiddle were the instruments used by the nobility up to the fifteenth century, the trumpet and drum took the lead in aristocratic circles thereafter. City bands existed at a very early epoch in Germany. The most ancient bands were those formed by the princes, for the amusement of their own courts; and sometimes these would be allowed to play for the gen-

\* The writer of the work was himself a member of the honorable Guild of Trumpeters and Drummers, and states that many of the nobility studied this "knightly art." The Duke of Weimar presented himself as a trumpeter in 1734, and after an examination as to his musical ability was admitted a member, by a committee of some forty drummers and trumpeters.

eral public, in the streets or public squares of the towns. With the rise of the burghers and of the free cities, the people had their own bands, which were heard on all occasions of great festivity. These bands often contained pipers; and the bagpipe was very popular in Germany in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. Albrecht Dürer has left drawings of these ancient musicians, which prove the bagpipes to have been about the same as those used in Scotland. It was natural that the strong rhythm of the bagpipe should influence the dance, and that the rhythm of the dance should influence the folksong; for in all popular music, since the days when the Scriptural characters clapped their hands in time with their singing, strongly marked rhythm has been a leading element.

Although it is not our purpose to trace instrumental form *per se* in this chapter, we may here remark that many modern orchestral forms have their origin in these primitive dances. The genealogy is somewhat as follows: first, the dances were used as instrumental pieces by the lutenists; then, the composers found that, by combining a stately dance with one of the livelier sort, they heightened the effect of both; then, the suite (originally, *suite de pièces*) took its rise and combined several of the dances in a long orchestral work, in one key throughout; and from the contrasted movements of the suite, not from the vague

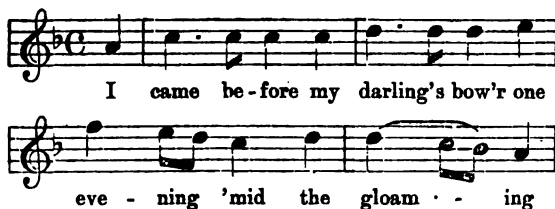
shape of the old *suonata*, came the modern symphony, sonata, string quartet, concerto, etc. Almost all our drawing-room music is written in a form derived from the combination of two of the old dances, with a repeat of the first one after the second. The subjects of the songs which were combined with the dances were various, but naturally never very sad or plaintive. Spring songs are numerous, legends sometimes appear, and love is a never-ending theme. Often these songs are given as a conversation between two persons, and there is reason to believe that these were sung as duets. The following is the first verse of such a dance-song:—

“ I came before my darling's bower  
One evening 'mid the gloaming,  
I spoke to her with passion's power,  
‘ Alas! I late am coming;  
But let me not here pleading stay,  
But give me cordial greeting,  
And let me in to thee, I pray.’  
‘ Oh, teasing youth, I must say nay,  
We shall not have a meeting;  
So chase your thoughts of love away,  
For you my heart's not beating.’ ”

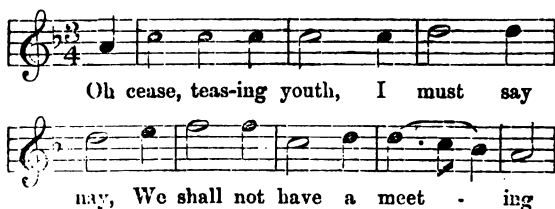
Sometimes the effect was heightened, and a contrasted form attained, by changing the rhythm of dance and song with each voice. The beginning of the male part of the above is given thus:—\*

\* Reissmann, *Geschichte der deutschen Musik*.





The female part changes thus:—



The first division would be called the *Vortanz*, or opening dance, the second the "after dance" (*Nach-tanz*), and between the two a considerable pause was made, while the dancers stood still. The first division was dignified and stately, but the second was wild and somewhat indelicate for a court dance. This combination of two different forms was much in favor at the end of the sixteenth century, and its contrasts undoubtedly led to the more developed contrasts of the suite.

But it was not to the dance forms that German song owed its chief charm: its earnestness and dignity

came from a much higher source; and all the passion of the Minnesingers, the pedantry of the Mastersingers, the zeal of the *Marienlieder*, and the jollity of the dance songs might have been unavailing to give to Germany a lasting répertoire of vocal music, had not the seeds and fruit been cherished in a movement which called forth all the enthusiasm of the German nation,— a movement which, entirely religious, yet called upon music to aid it in a powerful manner, unknown since the days of Ambrose, Gregory, and the early Church.

## VII.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE REFORMATION.

IN all times of great religious excitement, music has been an important factor in strengthening zeal or assisting devotion. Julian, the Apostate, ascribed the decline of pagan rites in Rome to the fact that the Christians had elevating music in their service, while the Roman heathen had not. In the introduction of Christianity into the northern nations, music always became the valued handmaid of religion. It is not surprising, therefore, to find music performing its highest mission during the white heat of the religious struggle of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and Martin Luther, a skilled musician and lover of music, fostering the art with a care which had its root not only in policy, but in personal taste as well. But even Luther, in striving to employ the art in the cause of religion, scarcely could have known how much influence he was exerting upon the German song of centuries later.

History must deny to Luther the composition of many of the tunes which have been ascribed to him ; \*

\*One by one, these songs have been traced to other sources. Even "A Strong Castle" is now ascribed to Franc.

but, in elevating the art to its great position in the Reformation, in causing the best composers to set the loftiest religious thoughts to singable music, in being the presiding genius over the music of his time, his work is immeasurably great. "I am not ashamed to say," he once said, "that, next to the study of divinity, I hold music to be the noblest of occupations." He was himself a good singer, and loved each evening, after supper, to join in part-singing, at which he is said to have been very expert. We have already declared our opinion that, when a nation possesses great poets, good composers are sure to follow; and a repertoire of songs is thus certain to arise. Luther served music most directly in this manner; for his poems intended for sacred music were of the loftiest character, and may, without irreverence, be compared to the dignity of the Scriptures. We have seen how, with the Meistersingers, Luther became the standard of pure German diction. Not less direct was the influence which caused the folk-song to be incorporated into the chorale of the Reformation, and not only gave it new dignity and power, but caused it to be preserved intact through coming ages. It was the perception of the true musician which caused Luther to use popular melodies as the basis of many of his chorales. Two facts, however, should be remembered in this connection; firstly, the folk-song of those days (even the love song) was of a very stately and dignified cast

(see selection in Chapter V.); and, secondly, the chorale was freer and bolder in the sixteenth century than in later times. One of the commonest errors of the musician of to-day is to imagine that the rigid school of Congregational singing comes to us through Luther and the chorale, whereas it has its root rather in the Genevan school,—that of Calvin,—which was so zealously taken up by the English Puritans and Scotch Covenanters, and through these influences afterward became acclimatized in America. The use of popular music in religious rites was nevertheless not original with Luther. Even in Scriptural times, this custom seems to have existed. Miriam's "Song of Triumph" must have been set to an Egyptian popular melody, to have been so entirely impromptu; and the early Christians in Rome did not disdain to use any popular melody, save those associated with the pagan rites or theatre, in their love feasts.

Luther certainly used no half-measures in selecting his songs. Soldiers' songs, sailors' songs, the melodies of the streets, were all taken, and pressed into the service of the Church. Before they were sung in religious service, however, they were purged from every element of triviality. They were set to dignified and musicianly counterpoint, under the direction of the great reformer, by the greatest composers available; and they were furnished with new words, sometimes by Luther himself.

"He was a Little Scholar who went to School," "I heard a Dame complaining," "All my Thoughts are with thee," and "I had a Stately Sweetheart" can be mentioned as songs which gave rise to great chorales. Bach's lofty chorale, "O Sacred Head now wounded," shows us that the ancient folk-song was not out of place as a religious selection; for this noble tune was originally a love song. During Luther's lifetime, many collections of hymns, derived from such popular sources, were published. One such collection bears the title "Soldiers', Sailors', and Miners' Songs, and other Low Street Songs, altered to the Service of God." Although the chorale soon became the characteristic musical expression of Protestant worship, it was not desired at first by Luther. The reformer desired to keep for the new church a ritual very much akin to the musical service of the Catholic Church,—the mass,—but to have it rendered in German instead of in Latin. The beginnings of Protestantism were far less radical than many imagine. In Germany this effort to retain the mass, in England a desire to hold to the prayers to the saints, prove that the religion and customs of centuries were not lightly overthrown. Luther's early singing in Eisenach had been in the ecclesiastical school of the mass; and, in 1526, he wrote, "Let the use of the Latin mass remain free to the young, so that the Latin tongue in which so many good songs are found shall not become unfamiliar."

In writing of the different modes of conducting worship, Luther held that, in the earnest meetings of the truly faithful, but little music was necessary; all should be regulated by the Bible, prayer, and Christian love. Luther was far from desiring to give an authoritative, formal church service to the Protestants. On the contrary, the changes which he made at different times clearly show that much was experimental, and that scarcely anything was to be regarded as entirely arbitrary. In the beginning, almost all the points of the mass were retained. The Kyrie became, "Lord, have mercy upon us"; the Gloria, "Allein Gott in der Höh' sei' ehr"; the Credo, "Wir glauben all' an einen Gott"; the Benedictus, "Gott sei gelobet und benediet"; and the Agnus Dei, "O Lamm Gottes unschuldig." But the beginning even of this close imitation of the Catholic service was always a congregational hymn,—a chorale or German psalm. This whole service could, in case of need, be given without employing a choir, as each number was suited to congregational singing; yet it must not be supposed that Luther was arrayed against choir-singing, the exact contrary is the case, and he more than once entered vehement protests against the disbanding of choirs. He desired choir-singing in the service, not only because he loved the art of music, but because he believed that a good choir would be a guide and model for the congregation in matters belonging to church

music. Of all the composers of his time, Luther ranked Josquin des Pres as highest. Naturally, many of the very best were in the service of the Catholic Church; but their music could be adapted, or translated and used in the German Protestant churches, whether they would or not. Yet even this was scarcely necessary; for, although the Protestant Church had not yet evolved its great tone masters, Bach and Händel, yet all Germany was awake in the new cause, and every literary mind wrought out a hymn, and every composer a tune, as the most worthy offering to the Church. The number of the chorales of the first century of the Reformation is colossal.



## VIII.

### THE MUSIC OF THE REFORMATION.

HENRY ISAAC was not far behind even Josquin des Pres in placing religious music on a firmer footing. The Evangelical Church owes to him the melody, "Nun ruhen alle Wälder" ("Now all the Woods are resting"), which he originally wrote as a secular song. But the pupil of Isaac, Ludwig Senfl, was Luther's avowed favorite. One evening, after singing a motette by this composer (for he always had music in the evening in his home), Luther said: "If I were to tear myself to pieces, I could not write a work like this. But then, he could not expound a psalm as I can. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are manifold and various, just as there are various organs in a body. But no one is contented with his own gifts, and we are never quite satisfied with what God has allotted us." Luther wrote a letter to Senfl in 1530, and the commentators have endeavored to place the latter among the Protestant composers because of this. It is scarcely necessary to say that this is not satisfactorily proven; and the fact that Senfl was in a public position in the most catholic court of Munich proves that his works were adapted, and not written, for the Protestant Church.

The same was true of many of the other composers whose names appear in the music of the Reformation. Heinrich Fink, Thomas Stoltzer, Stephen Mahn, Martin Agricola, Benedict Ducis, George Rhaw, and even Orlando di Lasso existed in the time of Luther's activity; while, in Venice, Adrian Willaert directed in the cathedral of St. Mark's, and taught many German disciples. Most important, however, in their influence upon the music of the Reformation were Conrad Rupf and Johann Walther, who worked with Luther in his great task of founding a music worthy of the great new Church which had arisen. Rupf was Kapellmeister to a Protestant prince, the Elector of Saxony. Walther was in the service of Frederic the Wise at Torgau, as chief singer, and subsequently also entered the service of the elector. He was one of the earliest of the skilled musicians who devoted their lives to the service of the Protestant Church. His *Geystlich Gesangk Büchleyn* was one of the earliest Protestant hymn-books. Walther gives many details of his life with Luther in Wittenberg, in 1524, during the time they worked on the above-mentioned hymnal. He states that Luther set tunes to several of the Gospels and Epistles, playing the melodies as he invented them on the flute, while he (Walther) noted them down.

The great epoch in the music of the Reformation was the year 1524, for the publication of Protestant hymn-books began at that time. It is difficult to ascer-

tain with certainty which was the very first collection of Protestant hymns published. The honor has been claimed for a book called the *Enchiridion*, published by Luther at Erfurt in 1524; but it is possible that the collection published at Wittenberg by the reformer, in the same year, may have been compiled earlier. The only copy of the first-named work in existence was destroyed by the German bombardment of Strassburg during the recent Franco-Prussian war, which burnt the town library where it was preserved.

The Protestant hymn-books, however, were not the oldest in Germany; for there was a Catholic one dated 1517, containing seventy-four tunes, some of which were composed especially for the collection, while others were older melodies. Unquestionably, the older chorales of the Hussites exerted a great influence upon the music of Luther's days; for they were carefully preserved and honored by the reformer, and incorporated in his hymnals. The *Enchiridion*, already mentioned, contains two.

The Protestant hymns found the most ardent welcome in Germany. Their music was lofty, and wedded to noble words. They were not too difficult for the people to sing; and the people therefore sang them with an enthusiasm that proved how well music, properly directed, was serving the cause of religion. Many who were not followers of Luther yet sang these hymns, until the fires of sectional strife blazed up too

hotly for such a thing to be done with safety. Luther aided the progress of these hymns by giving more and more of the vocal service into the hands of the congregations; yet, as we have before stated, he never cast his influence against choir singing. The latter, however, was to pave the way for more perfect congregational singing. Latin was the rock against which hitherto the cause of popular singing in the service had split. In the Latin mass (apart from the *Marienlieder* before spoken of), the congregation generally could only grasp the repeated phrase of the opening number; and the "Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison," was sung in season and out of season. With Luther's music, all was changed. He said, "I wish, after the example of the prophets and ancient Fathers of the Church, to make German psalms for the people; that is to say, sacred hymns, so that the word of God may dwell among the people by means of song also." If ever a wish was accomplished, this one was. The songs were taught in all the schools. The *Wanderbursch* sang them on his way. The besieged or persecuted Protestant found comfort even in the midst of his affliction in these songs. "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott" became really "a strong castle" to those who sang it. It was the battle-cry as well as the shelter of the Reformation. Yet the root of even this grand melody is to be found in the Roman Catholic chants which Luther had sung in his youth. Herr Köstlin, in a

recent treatise,\* easily proves that the music is not original, but that is little; it needed the fire and majesty of the words to give it meaning and life. The tune was the body, the hymn the soul. It was an application of Wagner's formula, "Music is the handmaid of poetry," three centuries before the operatic reformer had used it, and on a grander scale.

In closing our sketch of the music of this epoch, we may add, as items of interest, that Luther possessed a bass or baritone voice, and was a good player upon the flute and the lute. In addition to his practical work above described, he wrote a treatise in praise of music, and also the following poem in praise of the art, which we translate from the German, preserving as far as possible the odd vein of the original:—

DAME MUSICA. †

Of all earth's joy and pleasure  
Not one has greater bliss to measure  
Than that which lies in fine singing  
Or when tender tones are ringing.  
There can be no guilt or care  
Where the youths are singing fair.  
No envy, scorn, or hate bides long;  
And sorrow flies off at the song,  
And avarice and malice, too,  
Along with grief, they hide from view.

\* *Luther als der Vater des evangelischen Kirchengesanges.*

† This poem has so seldom been even spoken of in the biographies of Luther that we deem it necessary to state that not the slightest doubt can be cast upon its authenticity. It first appeared in a little book in praise of music, entitled *Lob und Preis der löblichen Kunst Musica*, by H. Johan.

And all is well the heart within,  
For such a joy is not a sin.  
God even takes delight in this;  
And for each mortal 'tis great bliss,  
Since Satan's work it hinders oft,  
The tone which rises sweet and soft.  
This well is seen in David's song  
Which did King Saul his life prolong  
With tender lays and harp's sweet tone,  
Else sure the king no peace had known.  
And by sweet music hearts are stirred  
To listen to God's Holy Word.  
Eliseus this secret knew,  
And played the harp with rapture, too.  
I love the sweet time of the year,  
When all the birds are singing clear.  
Then heaven and earth are full of glee,  
And many songs are borne to me.  
The nightingale with tender voice  
Makes all the pleasant woods rejoice.  
Her song can every bosom stir,  
And many thanks we give to her;  
But greater thanks to God be said;  
For he this songster fine has made,  
To be a model from above  
To all the souls that music love.  
Of God she sings the wondrous praise  
Through all the nights and all the days.  
To Him, too, would my song ascend,  
And thank him ever without end.

D. MARTIN LUTHER.

Walter, Wittenberg, 1538, with "a poetical introduction by Doctor Luther." It was republished in a periodical in Halberstadt in 1789, and thence reproduced (by Dr. J. A. G. Steuber) in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, June 19, 1811, whence we have made the translation.

## IX.

### GERMAN MUSIC AFTER LUTHER'S DEATH.

LUTHER's ideas had been too thoroughly promulgated to allow of any lapse of his musical plans after his death. Indeed, it became a labor of love, during the latter part of the sixteenth century, for every fairly educated Protestant to add at least one to the already long list of chorales. The music of the German Church which Luther had brought into existence only found culmination in the works of Bach two centuries later. Yet a vehement struggle ensued ere this climax was reached. Renewed strength to Catholicity and schisms in the Protestant ranks immediately followed the death of the reformer; and the atmosphere of sectional hatred and of distrust was not one in which the fine arts could thrive. One result, however, followed this, which was eventually beneficial. Secular music began to receive more attention on all sides, and flourished as never before. A most important change in the treatment of chorales took place at the end of the sixteenth century. In Luther's time, it was customary to give the melody of the chorale to the tenor voice, and to allow the upper voices to carry a discant or

counterpoint to it. Lucas Osiander, in 1586, made the decisive change of giving the melody to the highest voices, and defends this on the ground of suitability for public use. He says: "I know well that hitherto composers have led the chorale in the tenor. If one does this, however, then the melody is not well recognized among the voices. Therefore, I have given the melody to the discant, that it shall be easily known, and that every layman may sing along." Hans Leo Hassler (born 1564), a most celebrated composer of that time, gave his adhesion to the new system, which soon revolutionized chorale singing.

We must again mention here that the Calvinistic music of the Protestant Church, although accepting this reform, did it from no definite art principle. The entire spirit of the songs inaugurated by John Calvin was opposed to the brighter, florid style of the Lutherans. The Calvinists accepted music only as a necessary adjunct of divine worship, and did not desire that it should be in itself enjoyed. They pushed to a severe extreme the doctrine that the truest music for church use was that which attracted the least notice; and, as the Catholics had a brilliant and artistic musical service (which, as we have seen, Luther in some degree copied), they made their psalms most rigid and austere, giving rise to the square-cut, formal hymn tunes whose origin many to-day mistakenly attribute to Luther.



It would be unnecessary prolixity, in so short a history as this, to speak of the numerous composers who arose at this time in sacred and secular music; yet we must name one of the greatest, whose influence upon both schools was very marked. This was John Eccard, who won renown both as singer and composer, his practical abilities in the former art making all his works especially smooth, flowing, and successful.

Naturally, with the rise of German sacred song, the art of organ-playing received a very decided impetus. It must, however, not be forgotten that almost all instrumental performance at this epoch was but a support of singing; and even organ-playing had not yet become an independent species of music. The most striking proof of the low position occupied by this and much other instrumental music is found in the awkward fingering which was used by even the most advanced performers. The compass of the key-board of the clavicembalo or spinet (the piano of those days) was but four octaves, and that of the organ still less. A most extraordinary system was used in the lower octave of the organ, where the notes were not placed in their natural order, and some were omitted altogether. The notes of this octave were the following: C, F-sharp, D, G, E, G-sharp, and A, in the order named; and this nonsensical set received the name of the "short octave." We can discover no plausible reason for such a curious custom, but the omission

of notes may have occurred because of the fact that but few different keys were used in composition before Bach's time. Although Adrian Willaert had (about the year 1550) discovered the principle of the tempered scale, yet the scale of nature was persistently clung to by many, causing distant modulations to be practically impossible, and forcing composers to use very few keys, and those closely related to C, in their instrumental works or those instrumentally accompanied. Only with Bach's *Well-tempered Clavichord* was the equality of all keys thoroughly established. The fingering of the works was such that no great virtuosity could by any possibility have been attained. One would naturally imagine that, with a key-board under the hand, a natural fingering would result almost spontaneously. Such was by no means the case with our forefathers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The scale of C major was played with the second and third fingers only, both ascending and descending. Only, upon the highest note the fourth finger was allowed, thus :—



In the above, we have given the German fingering, and have, for the sake of simplicity, used the G-clef,

although the use of this clef did not become general until the eighteenth century.

It will be noticed that, in the above system of fingering,—if it can be called such,—the thumb and little finger are *not used at all*. These fingers were very sparingly used, even in intervals. Thirds were struck with the second and fourth fingers, fourths, fifths, and sixths with the second and fifth, and only larger intervals with the thumb and fifth finger. One cause of this fingering is easily discovered. The keyboard of the organ was so high, or the organist's seat so low, that he could not easily reach the keys with the comparatively short thumb and little finger. It must also be remembered that down to about the year 1480 the organ had no fingering whatever, but the keys, from three to six inches wide, were struck by the player with clenched fist, while, even after this epoch, the keys were made about one-third wider than at present, causing the fingering, at best, to be very different from the modern system. Yet even these explanations do not account for the application of such a system to the smaller-keyed clavicembalo or spinet, nor for the fact that it was preserved for over one hundred and fifty years, only going out of use about the year 1730. Nor does it account for the fact that very little importance was attached to the fingering in any case. The student was allowed in those days to take any fingers which seemed most con-

venient to him. In 1619, Prætorius says, "Many have a fashion to despise some organists who use this or that system of fingering, which, to my mind, is not worth the trouble of speaking about; for a person can run up or down with his fore, middle, or hind finger,—yes, and help with his nose if he wants to, so long as he brings everything fine, exact, and pleasant to the ear." In the early part of the eighteenth century, the C scale was fingered thus:—



and, in the left hand, thus:—



It would be difficult to conjecture what idea gave rise to such an order. It is to Bach that the world is indebted to the first practical system of fingering; for he brought the thumb and little finger into as constant use as the other digits, and founded the method of fingering which has been in use, with slight modifications, ever since.

But sufficient has been said to convince the most sceptical that brilliant playing was not possible in the epoch of which we write.

## X.

### THE RISE OF SECULAR AND OPERATIC MUSIC IN GERMANY.

ALREADY in these early days, Germany had shown a greater tendency toward instrumental music than any other nation; and this taste caused the Germans to be recognized as the leaders in lute, clavichord, and other instrumental branches of composition. This leadership Germany has never lost; for, after the race of lute-players had become nearly extinct, the clavichord compositions of Bach took the leading place in instrumental music, only to be followed in turn by the sonata and symphonic forms of Haydn, their development by Mozart and Beethoven, and finally by the romantic efforts of the moderns, but, in one form or another, since the sixteenth century, Germany has been pre-eminently the land of instrumental composition. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, it is said that Germany possessed nearly fifty different varieties of musical instruments; and, one hundred years later, the historian Prætorius describes more than one hundred kinds, all of which he declares to be in general use. Nevertheless, singing was not neglected because of this overwhelming fondness for

instrumental music, but was somewhat influenced thereby. Solo singing, for example, was made but little of in many countries; but in Germany, where the lute furnished such excellent support for the voice, the songs for a single voice soon reached a very large number. It was customary in such songs not to write the various harmonies in full, but merely to give a figured bass, which any musician of the time was required to be able to render at sight into appropriate harmonies. We subjoin an example of this kind of work, taken from a collection published in the early part of the eighteenth century.

### SMOKING-TOBACCO AND SNUFF.

Song.

1st. v. What de-light To - bac - co - smok-ing,  
2d. v. Snuff is best 'Tis great - er treas - ure,

Cembalo.

Pleas - ure e - ver 'tis pro - vok - ing,  
Gives the nose se - re - ner pleas - ure,



After different praises of their favorite modes of using the weed, the two singers give a duet, which we have not space to reproduce, since our only object is to examine the style of notation of these songs.

The birth of a great school of vocal composition — the operatic — on the other side of the Alps was not without its effect upon the songs of Germany; but, even before the importation of Italian opera, the Germans possessed a sort of musical-dramatic entertainment, as also did the Italians before the invention of the true opera. The following is the title of one of these early works: "A beautiful singing-play of three bad wives, whom neither God nor their husbands can satisfy. To be exhibited by six persons." This was printed in Nuremberg, in 1618.

Naturally, such broad touches were intended for the general public; while the aristocracy had more refined spectacles, in which music bore a prominent part. As early as 1628, the Italian opera had made its entrance into Germany. In fact, the wonderful new

school, which combined in itself all the beauty of poetry, the power of music, the charms of painting, and the luxury of princes, spread at once among the aristocracy of every land. England and France, as well as Germany, at once cherished the new entertainment which had arisen from the good taste of a few cultivated Florentine noblemen, gentlemen of excellent culture, but by no means astounding musicians. It was the Italian opera of *Daphne* by Rinuccini, which had the honor of first representing the new school in Germany. The following was the plot of the work, and will suffice to show how different was the construction of a libretto at that time from the present.

Ovid entered first to speak the prologue, as it was often customary to bring in the shade of some Grecian poet to announce the play. It must be borne in mind that the opera owed its inception to an effort to bring back the *mousike* of the ancient Greeks. Now enter three shepherds, complaining of the frightful dragon who has laid the country waste, and now lies gorged with blood in the neighboring wood. Echo now enters as a consoling nymph. Echo was frequently personified in the early Italian operas, taking a part not unlike that of some of the choruses of Euripides. Apollo enters, and changes the character of the scene by announcing that he has killed the dragon, on which, with a concerted musical expression of thanks by the shepherds, the act closes. The second act begins



with a conversation between Cupid, Venus, and Apollo. The last-named satirizes Cupid's little bow and arrows, and tells him that he will never kill a dragon with these. Cupid swears revenge, and the chorus of shepherds closes the act with a praise of love. The third act shows that Cupid has taken his revenge. Apollo is deeply in love with Daphne, but all his sighs are in vain. She avoids him, in spite of his protestations that he is a god; and the obliging shepherds again bring the act to a close with a chorus in praise of love. In the fourth act, Cupid and Venus have a dialogue; and, again, the persistent shepherds sing further praises of love, this time adding the ichthyological fact that not a fish in the sea but is moved by love, and the agricultural information that even the herbs of the field are obliged to yield to the softening influences of the tender passion. This closes the act. Now comes the fifth act, which closes the lengthy story. Apollo is again seen chasing Daphne. The latter in despair calls upon her father, the river god, Peneus, to help her, and is changed into a laurel tree, which moves Apollo to a prolix complaint, in which he finally resolves to cause the laurel tree to be honored forever; and, with a dance of nymphs and shepherds around the tree, the opera ends. A very different plot from Meyerbeer's *Huguenots* or Rössini's *William Tell*, although it must be confessed that many of the modern Italian operas are scarcely less weak in their librettos than this earliest of operas.

Often, at the close of such an opera, an epilogue was spoken, complimentary to the princes in whose honor the entertainment was given; and these were generally compared to the heroes of the play.

There were no large vocal forms used in these early operas, and even the aria came into existence nearly a generation later. In a work such as the one above described there would be short, interchanging melodies, and probably a single chorus to each act, to bring matters to a dignified conclusion. The acts themselves must have been extremely short; but probably the "waits" between them were long, since many preparations had to be made for grand scenic and mechanical effects, many of which would be considered wonderful even in our day.

And now, for a long time, Italian vocal music was the only secular music cared for at courts and in aristocratic circles, even in Germany. Vast sums were expended in importing Italian singers, and every German court made it a point of pride to possess an Italian leader and a company of Italian singers. For a long time, opera in Germany was only an abject copying of the Italian school; and, had it rested with the courts alone, it might have gone on thus forever, for there was no desire to build up an independent, a national school,—only a longing to hear gentle southern cadences, "of linked sweetness long drawn out," on the part of the princes of all the German States.

To the city of Hamburg is due the honor of first having changed this state of affairs ; for in that city, on the 2d of January, 1678, the first original German opera was given. It was almost exactly a half century since the Italian opera had made its entrance into the country, and about eighty years after the composition of the first Italian opera. The opera was not given for the entertainment of a prince, but under the auspices of a number of sturdy and wealthy burghers. The work was a semi-religious one, and was entitled *Adam and Eve*, words by Richter, music by J. Thiele, and the dances arranged by M. de la Feuillade.

The stage, at the beginning of this work, represented chaos, which was gradually divided by the four elements, who sang melodious phrases alternately during the partition. Fire brought the prologue to an end by asking the indulgence of the gentry for the new play which was to follow. It may be remarked in this connection that many things occurred, even in the sacred operas of the ancient days, which seem intensely ludicrous to modern taste ; but it is doubtful whether it was the intention of the writers to introduce a playful element into serious operas. The first act of the first of German operas began with what must have been a startling mechanical effect. Lucifer is cast from heaven into the abyss, by angels ; and then the Deity descended, and created Adam and Eve. In the second act, Lucifer was seen storming about in the infer-

nal regions, and calling his legions together. Finally, Sodi, the imp of secrecy, was despatched, in the shape of a serpent, to charm Eve. The triumphant success of the scheme led to a number of choruses of infernal imps, after which the succeeding acts took place in heaven, and dealt largely with promises of the redemption. But, at the close, Adam and Eve were pictured as cast out of paradise, and, after bewailing their sin, being consoled by the appearance of the Saviour, who promised to lift off the punishment. Naturally, such a plot gave ample opportunities for the display of rich scenery and magnificent stage effects. Although we should hesitate to hazard any guesses about the costumes in so strange a plot as that of Adam and Eve before the fall, yet, as there was not much flagrant indelicacy on the stage at the time, we can hazard the conjecture that the appearance of the hero and heroine must have been startlingly incongruous.

It will scarcely be necessary to speak of the operas which immediately followed. In all of them there were paradoxical situations and odd incongruities, as well as the quaintest mixture of gods, goddesses, personified elements, and pagan and Christian heroes and saints in the most startling juxtaposition. In *The Birth of Christ* (1681), not only a host of Scriptural characters appear, but Apollo and the priestess Pythia, furious at the downfall of Paganism. In *Cain and Abel* (1689), the four winds hold a conference, and de-

cide to rage forever against the race of the murderer. In *The Maccabean Mother and her Seven Sons*, the apostate Jew Javan appears, and eats pork sausage and ham every moment, and praises their taste to his orthodox brethren.

Everything in the German opera, at first, was rude, uncultured, and even coarse,—vastly different from the elegant entertainment which became permanent in Italy. But, in a short time, Germany found a national composer (as France had already done in Lully), who was to advance her opera to a position of independence. This composer was Reinhard Keiser.

## XI.

### THE RISE AND FALL OF GERMAN OPERA.

REINHARD KEISER was born near Leipzig, in 1673, and was one of those natural talents who achieve many things in art without great effort. Such talents, however, seldom leave a very permanent impression in lasting reforms of any kind. Beethoven, who worked and toiled and polished and refined until the most humble themes became pregnant with a meaning before unknown, was perhaps one of the best proofs of the truth of Carlyle's saying,—“Genius is only the capacity for taking pains.” Keiser was of a vastly different stamp. Lindner calls him the Mozart of the first period of German music, and it is certain that he possessed some of the fertility of invention and melodic grace which afterward shone in the Salzburg musician; but he became spoiled by success, and often aimed for immediate recognition rather than permanent worth. Nevertheless, it needed such a man to combat the ultra Italian taste which dominated Germany. His fertility was something astonishing. Almost without effort, he poured forth opera after opera, until the number reached to nearly *one hundred and*

*twenty*, most of them of great length, some containing as many as fifty airs, with a goodly admixture of duets, recitatives, instrumental interludes, and choruses. As was the case with the Italian opera, the recitatives took the place of spoken dialogue, the latter being admitted only in the comic operas of that time. Keiser's power may be estimated by the fact that he alone and single-handed was able to turn the tide which from Italy had rolled over Germany. His operas were not only performed at Hamburg, but spread at once through Germany, and finally reached even Paris. The Hamburg operatic stage was to Germany, at this epoch, what the Parisian stage afterward became to France; and it was this fact which drew Keiser from Leipzig, thither. He had, in his earliest youth, won recognition in Leipzig as a wonderful musician, and was soon called to Wolfenbüttel as operatic composer. There, at the age of nineteen, he brought forth two operas, which won immediate success; and this determined him to attempt a career in Hamburg. In 1694, he made his appearance there with his opera of *Basilus*. Keiser seems to have written somewhat like the French composers of that day. His forms were small, and he aimed at prettiness rather than depth. He seems to have been a light-hearted, merry wight, turning from music to dissipation very easily, careless about improving his style in composition, dressing foppishly, keeping richly liveried servants, and generally

desirous of playing the fine gentleman. It was the nature of a man of the world (of that time) rather than that of the earnest musician; but under it all was the wonderful gift of melodic thought, in the fecundity of which he can only be likened to a Haydn, a Mozart, or a Schubert. We can easily imagine the superiority with which he looked down upon other and better musicians of his time, who were generally plodding, laborious, pedantic, ill-dressed, and poor. He attempted everything with careless indifference. One day, it would be a sacred anthem; the next, an indecent musical farce, sometimes so out of bounds that the Senate was obliged to prohibit the performance. The comical operas and musical farces of that time were a very strange *olla podrida*. Noise, noise, and noise seems to have been the chief delight of the public and the main desire of the composer. Battles took place, with constant discharges of musketry and cannon. Fireworks and explosions were introduced, sometimes even to the danger of audience and edifice. Fairies, demons, dragons, etc., were forever in action. Camels, monkeys, and even wild beasts, were often upon the stage. What wonder that, with such debasement of art, the Hamburg opera went down almost as speedily as it had arisen! But, if its splendor was short-lived, at least it served a great purpose during its career; for it proved to the German people that they could originate their own secular music, and need not depend



upon foreign works, even in opera. It must, however, be remembered that, even in the palmy days of the Hamburg school, the level of the Italian opera was not reached. In every opera of the German school at this epoch, a comical character was demanded. It mattered not that the opera was upon a lofty subject or that it dealt even with holy personages. If the clown was lacking, so was the public. The managers were obliged to yield to the pressure; and comical servants, tinkers, tailors, and cobblers were the mainstay of many an operatic performance in Hamburg, while the worthy burghers never tired of laughing at the mishaps of some unfortunate Jew on the stage.

Another strange illustration of the unformed and uncouth taste of the times is found in the fact that these operas were often a mixture of various languages. This absurd custom had its origin in the fact that foreign singers would often interpolate a song in their native tongue; and, finally, this incongruity was not only looked upon as unimportant, but even regarded as giving an additional charm. Naturally Keiser yielded to every temptation to make his work more fascinating to the paying public; and, in 1707, we find him composing *The Carnival of Venice*, a musical farce in four languages,—Italian, French, High German, and Low German, or *plattdeutsch*.

But poor Keiser fell upon on evil times at last, for he had to compete with a true genius. His flashing me-

teor was all very well in its way, but it faded wofully in the rays of a sun which had arisen. Handel had come upon the scene, and even the frivolous public of Hamburg could not fail to see the difference between the earnest works of the new composer and the pretty songs of their whilom favorite. Handel entered Keiser's orchestra in a manner that did not awaken the suspicion of the composer and director to the fact that he was nurturing a genius who would grow and destroy him; for the unknown violinist pretended to be something of an ignoramus, and displayed no especial musical talent, until one fine day, Keiser being obliged to hide temporarily from his creditors, the young violinist, Handel, took his place as conductor at the harpsichord,\* and led so well that he remained there. Keiser made many efforts to retain his hold on the public, but with little effect. In 1728, he became cantor at the cathedral, and turned his attention to sacred music, not without some success. His capacity to fall on his feet after any catastrophe cannot be doubted; for he succeeded, even after Handel had become known, in receiving great honors from foreign courts,† in marrying the daughter of a prominent Hamburg citizen, and in pushing yet a few more

\* Almost all conducting in the last century was done by giving out the time from harpsichord or organ. The fashion of leading an orchestra with a bâton, although known in Italy in the seventeenth century, took no permanent root anywhere until this present century.

† He was appointed Kapellmeister to the King of Denmark, and lived in Copenhagen some years.

operas (in mixed languages) upon the public. The last of these was *Circe*, composed in 1734. After that, he disappeared from the scene, and died in 1739, scarcely regretted by the people who had once idolized him.

Summing up his talent, one must say that he was just the man to combat the Italian influence in Germany; for he was able to fight the invader with his own weapons, having a fund of melody which even the Italian composers might envy. He was not the only light of this peculiar period of German opera. Handel could have given back to it all its old splendor, and have advanced it to a higher plane; but he soon departed for Italy. Mattheson did great service to the German school; but his labor was not confined to opera alone, and the influence exerted by the two friends (for Mattheson and Handel were boon companions) seems important enough to be treated of in special detail in our next chapter. Therefore, we pass to the last of the great composers of the Hamburg school, George Philip Telemann. He was born in 1681, in the city of Magdeburg, and received no regular musical instruction; but, by zealously studying the scores of the old French composers, he gradually became able to compose. Meanwhile, he also kept on in a scientific course of education. Although he won honor in the latter, his excellence as an organist and his abilities as a composer soon were recognized; and,

by various lucrative appointments, he was forced entirely into a musical career. In 1721, after holding several important positions, we find him director of the principal church in Hamburg and cantor at the Johanneum, both of which posts he held until his death. He was much influenced by the French school of composition, both on account of his early studies and because of a long visit made to Paris in 1737. His compositions were innumerable. His contrapuntal skill was marvellous, and Handel says of him that he could write an eight-voiced motet as easily as one would write a letter. But this was a fatal facility. It has been said of Dean Swift that he could mould language so easily that he could write beautiful verses to a broomstick. In the same manner, Telemann grew indifferent in his choice of subjects, and once said that "a good composer should be able to set an advertisement to music," evidently caring little for poetry in art, and, contrary to the modern principles, imagining that the music of a composition was more important than the words. Naturally, he became a conventional composer; and, although his contemporaries ranked him among the greatest composers of his time, posterity has not re-echoed the opinion, and it seems passing strange to us that the world should at any time have ranked such a man above John Sebastian Bach. He wrote some forty operas, but long outlived the existence of the German opera as a public performance.

He died in 1767; while the Hamburg opera vanished in 1738, after an existence of sixty years.

Two hundred and forty-six different operas had been produced in that time. German opera entirely disappeared with the performance of a work entitled *Atlanta* in Dantzic, in 1741, which was the last German operatic effort of the early epoch. An Italian opera troupe, under Angelo Mingotti, came to Hamburg; and thenceforth, for a couple of generations, the Italian school ruled here, as it did all over Germany. But the history of the Hamburg opera is interesting as showing the conflict of two schools of composition; and, even if the greater overcame the weaker, we know that this first flash of German opera was not in vain, for its result was not altogether barren. The seed lay dormant for half a century, and then brought forth a golden and beautiful harvest.

## XII.

### HANDEL AND MATTHESON.

WERE one speaking of the general compositions of Handel,\* it would be an absurdity to couple his great name with that of Mattheson; but we are only concerned with the short part of his career which was devoted to German opera and song, and during this epoch he was thrown almost constantly with the latter, either as friend or rival. Therefore, our history will be more succinct if we speak of them together. There were points of unity, yet also great contrasts, between the two men. They were of nearly the same age. Both were composers beginning their career together, and both finished their careers well-to-do and highly respected men. Yet the end was attained by vastly different means. Handel, irascible, irregular in habit and nature, careless in very much that he undertook, was yet a genius: Mattheson, careful, shrewd, and calculating, regular as a railway time-table, was a martinet in music, and came very near being what the Germans

\* The spelling of the name of this composer became metamorphosed into Handel in England. Haendel or Händel is the German spelling. Händel at first spelled his name Hendel in England, to give a phonetic idea of its pronunciation.

expressively call a *Philister*. Handel's genius shone forth even in his youngest years, and the solid training he received from Zachau in Halle made him almost as learned as he was spontaneous in invention. The death of his father brought him to Hamburg to earn a subsistence for himself and his mother; and he at once made the acquaintance of Mattheson, who was then tenor singer and composer at the opera, under the direction of Reinhard Keiser. This was in 1703; and, during the three years (Mattheson erroneously says it was five or six years) which Handel spent in Hamburg, the two young men were the closest of companions. Mattheson was twenty-two, Handel eighteen. Mattheson had a firm position, and was already known as a rising man, while Handel, in order to get along peaceably in the orchestra where he was engaged as violinist, pretended to be a dull clod of a musician, able to play his part, but utterly without ambition beyond that. The acquaintance between the two began at the organ of the Church of St. Mary Magdalen, and was at once of benefit to Handel; for Mattheson took him to his father's house, and introduced him in many families, besides taking him to the opera, theatres, and concerts of Hamburg. Mattheson kept the secret of his musical powers well guarded, while Handel enacted the part of half-witted second violinist in the opera; but when the opportunity came, and the latter took the position of leader of the orchestra, as described in the last

chapter, the relations between our two young men became more strained and less natural, for Mattheson was both jealous and conceited, and Handel was by no means of a yielding disposition, and kept all the advantages he could attain. Mattheson says of Handel at this time: "He composed very long, long airs, and almost endless cantatas, which, although the harmonious treatment was perfect, nevertheless had not the requisite fitness; nor did they exhibit the proper taste. However, the high school of the opera soon put him upon the right track. He was great upon the organ, greater even than Kuhnau, in fugues and counterpoint, especially in extemporizing" (this greatness Handel had all his life, and many traditions regarding his performance exist in England even to this day). "However, he knew very little of melody until he had to do with the Hamburg opera. On the other hand, Kuhnau's pieces were all extremely melodious, and suited for the voice, even those arranged for playing. In the preceding century, scarcely any one thought of melody: all aimed merely at harmony."

In reading this criticism by a contemporary, it must be borne in mind that Mattheson wrote it at a much later epoch, when Handel had become world-famous, and when he was most thoroughly jealous of his ex-companion's great reputation. In fact, all that Mattheson wrote—and he wielded a versatile and bitter pen—seems to have been partially inspired by a desire to



vaunt his own musical capacity at the expense of his contemporaries. Most amusing is the account of the two friends going to Lübeck in August, 1703, to see whether one of them could become successor to the organist's position held by Buxtehude, who had announced his intention of retiring. To their amazement, they found that the veteran had made one condition imperative upon the applicants: the successful contestant, like a fortunate prince in a fairy tale, was to marry his daughter. To this arrangement they both emphatically objected, and returned to Hamburg without competing, although another musician, Johann Christian Schieferdecker, was found more pliable, and won both the position and the lady soon after. It proves conclusively that Mattheson did not care to measure himself against Handel's skill on the instrument that, when the contest was abandoned, they agreed that during the remainder of their stay in Lübeck Handel should play only on the organ and Mattheson only upon the harpsichord.

- In the year 1704, the friendship of the pair suffered a violent rupture. Handel's claim to be allowed to continue first harpsichord of the Hamburg operatic orchestra had given rise to some disputes among the musicians, and there was a degree of especial touchiness and obstinacy in the young leader regarding this point. Mattheson was at the opera in the double capacity of composer and singer; and it was custom-

ary to allow him to direct his own operas, when he was not occupied as a singer upon the stage. Handel, however, did not follow Keiser's courtesy in this matter; and, when at the performance of *Cleopatra*, on the night of the 5th of December, 1704, after the death of Antony and the conclusion of his part, the tenor composer came into the orchestra to direct the remainder of the opera, he calmly ignored him, and retained his place at the harpsichord. It was a rather ungrateful return for Mattheson's civilities, and he naturally felt indignant. When Handel was leaving the opera house, he was given a solid box on the ear by his irate companion. Both drew their swords, and a duel followed, in which both showed considerable courage; and Handel would probably have been killed but for a brass button which turned the point of his adversary's sword.

The quarrel soon blew over, however; and Handel not only remained at the leader's post, but became composer for the company as well. His first opera was written toward the end of this year, and was produced Jan. 8, 1705. It was entitled *Almira*: and, to show how the composer's style had changed from the "long, long airs," with "little of melody," which Mattheson (above) charges him with composing on his arrival in Hamburg, we produce one selection from this first opera of the great composer. It is probable that study of the pretty airs of Reinhard Keiser

had influenced him somewhat. Our readers will readily see that the following dance from the early opera led to a song in a much later opera (*Rinaldo*\*), which has become famous the world over as "Lascia ch'io pianga."

## SARABANDE.

From "ALMIRA."



\* *Rinaldo* was one of Händel's earliest operas in England. It was produced six years after his first opera, *Almira*.



This is but one instance out of many illustrating Handel's method of robbing Peter to pay Paul. He took freely from the melodies of his earlier works and incorporated them in his later operas and in his great oratorios, the best of which were only begun late in life. He even took the melodies of other composers without giving credit, and used them as his own; but it must be confessed that in every such case the

plagiarism is pardonable, for the thoughts are treated in such a manner as to make them seem altogether different and infinitely grander than before. Let our readers play the above Sarabande and then perform "Lascia ch' io pianga" (generally entitled, "Leave me in anguish," or "O Lord, correct me," in the English adaptations), and they will at once perceive the full force of this statement. Handel produced other operas for the Hamburg stage,—*Nero*, produced Feb. 25, 1705, under his own direction, and some time later *Florindo* and *Daphne*. In 1706, Handel left Germany for Italy, and had no further connection with the Hamburg stage nor any direct influence on the German vocal music thereafter. His life was given to promoting Italian opera in England, and, finally, to establishing the great oratorios which have become the heritage not of a nation, but of the entire world. His further progress, therefore, needs no detailed analysis here, especially since his one German oratorio, *The Passion*, composed in Hanover between 1716 and 1718, is of little worth compared with the great works which closed his career. Mattheson's subsequent career blended music and politics in a very strange but pecuniarily successful manner. He became an *attaché* of the English embassy in Saxony, and held many important State offices thereafter. He was an accomplished man of the world, rather foppish (Keiser gave him the nickname of the "white cravat"),

very systematical, and his merits attracted the attention of Sir John Wych, the British ambassador, who made him music teacher and tutor to his son, in place of Handel, who was discharged after having given a few lessons. Soon afterward, the post of private secretary was added to his duties; and the foundation of a fortune was laid. The modern commentators have scarcely done full justice to Mattheson. They call him a coxcomb, a conceited pedant, charlatan, and many other not very complimentary appellations; and, when one views the complacent, smirking self-conceit which stands out in every other sentence of his literary works, it is difficult not to join in the chorus.

But Mattheson must be credited with being an indefatigable worker, and with continuing in music even after all necessity for his doing so had passed,—evidently, therefore, purely from a love of the art. He was troubled with deafness from his twenty-fourth year until his death, at the age of eighty-three; and he was no Beethoven. His life was comfortable and respectable from beginning to end, and he had none of those fiery trials which refine the gold of the artist. He was a worthy Christian, and every day read a portion of the Scriptures, and, “when the St. Michael’s Church was burnt down, contributed some forty thousand marks for a new organ, paid the money in advance, and intends to do more in different ways,” as he himself informs us. He was a musical prodigy

in his youth. He first appeared as a singer, with the Hamburg troupe, in female characters, but, after his voice changed, became one of the chief tenors. He was not without personal courage, as his duel with Handel proves. His music was dry and mediocre; but his writings were very readable, generally witty and sarcastic, yet not always reliable. Nevertheless, his sharp pen made him feared by many of his contemporaries, who had not the ability to contend with him in literary strife, even if they were better musicians. His writings have, even to-day, considerable value, as they give insight into the state of music in the eighteenth century, and reflect something of the taste of the epoch. That he thought his own works excellent and believed in them is evident from the fact that he composed his own funeral anthem, which was duly sung after his death, and is said to have been fully as dreary as any of his preceding compositions.

### **XIII.**

#### **JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH.—HIS LIFE.**

FROM the time of Luther down to the beginning of the present century, no man exerted so powerful an influence upon German song as John Sebastian Bach, although his vocal work lay almost entirely in the direction of church music. In speaking of this contrapuntal giant, it seems almost impossible to avoid both comparisons and contrasts with that other great master who also won his triumphs in sacred music, and whose life seems curiously held up by fate in juxtaposition with the gentle career of the subject of this chapter. Bach and Handel were born within but a few days of each other, Bach being born on the 21st of March, 1685, and Handel twenty-six days earlier, on the 23d of February; both German, both making their own way against difficulties, and both stricken with blindness in their later days; both, also, achieving the highest triumphs in ecclesiastical music. What wonder, then, that the world glibly says "Bach and Handel," or "Handel and Bach," and superficially imagines them the twin representatives of an epoch which was undoubtedly full of ingenious music, but which has be-



come rather musty to modern taste! Never was a mistake more pronounced or more unjust. They are not mates: they are opposites. Having given the above points of resemblance, we can only speak thereafter of dissimilarity, of contrast, and of opposition of school and of nature. Bach was kind, benevolent, and in family relation a veritable patriarch. His life was spent in quiet dignity and labor; and while fame came upon him unavoidably, because of his great attainments, he never sought for it, and never knew the worldly ways by which it could be used for his own advancement. He was courteous even to musicians who were far beneath him in ability, receiving even the conceited Hurlebusch (a clavicinist of very slight ability and magnified self-importance) with civility and kindness; while toward the greatest artists he displayed a reverence that proved how far removed was jealousy from so noble a nature.

It is not our intention to belittle the genius which gave to the world a "Messiah," a "Judas Macca-bæus," or an "Israel in Egypt"; but the senseless combination of the two masters on a plane of equality deserves rebuke in very definite terms. Personally, then, Handel was entirely the opposite of Bach. Irascible, impetuous, and arbitrary, domestic life had no charms for him; and he never married, but lived a contentious and excited life, amid the constant sinu-  
osities of court intrigue and operatic cabal. Dignity

was not in him, and his vehement bursts of passion and his enormous appetite led to more than one epigram and caricature in that age of lampooning. Handel roundly abused inferior musicians, and had but little patience with any who did not accord him a leading place in the musical world; while as to equals (or superiors),—there was but one,—when Bach sought to meet him, he made not the slightest effort to have an interview, and, owing to his own course of action, the two never met. Yet, even at that time, none could have known better the worth of the quiet Leipzig composer, whom the world at large had not yet fairly recognized. Handel was charitable, but it was generally in a conspicuous and public manner; and, while Handel died wealthy, Bach died so poor that the family was obliged to break up at his decease, to avoid starvation. His wife died ten years later in the almshouse. Bach was precluded by religious scruples from attempting the school in which Handel passed the greater number of his years,—the composition of opera. In short, Bach worked consistently, thoroughly, devotedly, all his life at a style of composition which Handel only took up steadily after he had become a man of declining years. That Handel worked with all the fire and impetuosity of genius, the works of the later period emphatically prove; yet he naturally could not attain the ease and perfection of form of the man whose entire existence had been spent in producing religious works of large form.

It is in just this direction that the relative value of the two composers has been miscalculated. Bach, because of the care with which he perfected his forms and the symmetry with which he invested all his work, becomes daily more useful to the thorough musical student. In instrumental work, especially, he was the superior of Handel; for, where the latter would brilliantly and rapidly dash off an interesting suite or a fugue, Bach, in a quiet and persistent way, would study the principles underlying instrumental music, and would fit his pieces practically to illustrate some pedagogic or acoustical point, and thus give them a value for all time. The fugues of the *Well-tempered Clavichord*, for example, are not only most interesting examples of this school of composition, but fixed the equality of the keys for all time.\* Bach could never have written an oratorio in three weeks (Handel composed the opera of *Rinaldo* in fourteen days, and the *Messiah* in twenty-four), but he could stubbornly pursue an idea in musical form or theory until it had yielded up its every secret to him, and, therefore, his researches are more valuable to the modern musical world than those of any of the older composers. The mere statement of some of his labors would seem to prove this. He was a great composer in every field

\*The tempering of the scale, as will be seen, did not originate with Bach; but he was the first practically to introduce it, by thus proving the equality of all the keys. Before this time, only three or four keys were used in composition.

except the operatic. He established the fugue (as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven afterward established the symphony); he fixed the form of the suite; he established the use of all the keys, practically introducing the tempered scale, which had been promulgated by Willaert centuries before; he first established a proper fingering for pianoforte, or clavichord, music; he was a superb organist, and an equally great clavichord player; he was a violinist of thorough technical knowledge; he understood the construction of the organ; he invented a new violin,—the *viola pomposa*,—standing between viola and violoncello, and gave many improvements to the clavichord; he was an engraver of music, and from necessity engraved and printed many of his compositions and theoretical works. Thus, it will be seen that, while Handel's influence, upon the student especially, has grown weaker since his death, Bach's has grown and is growing continually stronger; and, even in this homophonic age, his polyphony is an inspiration to the musician and a guide to the pupil.

The life of this man remains one of the purest and most dignified in the pages of musical biography. His mother died while he was yet a child; and the death of his father (court and town musician at Eisenach) soon after, in 1695, left Bach an orphan at ten years of age. He had come of a very musical stock. In Germany, at that time, there were many families where the art and profession of music had descended from father

to son for generations ; but in no family had this continued so long and brought forth such great results as in that of the Bachs. Beginning with Veit Bach, born somewhere between 1550 and 1560, and who was chased from Germany to Hungary and back again, because of his Protestant belief, the family produced musician after musician, reaching its climax in John Sebastian Bach, yet giving forth musical geniuses still later in his sons, and then becoming extinguished in his solitary musical grandson, Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst Bach, pianist, violinist, and composer, who died as late as 1846. The orphan boy, in 1695, was obliged to live with his brother, John Christopher Bach, an organist at Orduff in Weimar, and from him received the first regular training in the art which he was soon to adorn. His brother must have been a hard and stern man ; for we read of Bach's eagerness to possess certain musical manuscripts in his library, of stealthy copyings on moonlight nights, — for he had no candle, — of the final completion of the treasured transcriptions, and of the rough confiscation of the hard-earned prize, on its discovery. As with Schubert, a fine soprano voice lifted the boy somewhat above the bitterness of extreme poverty ; and a choir position in Luneberg enabled him for three years to pursue his musical studies under a little more favorable conditions. At the end of that time, his voice changed ; but he was now a good musician,

capable of attaining other positions, and in 1703 he left Luneberg and went to Weimar, where he obtained an engagement as violinist in the duke's band. The following year, he became organist of the new church at Arnstadt, a position much more to his liking, since he always exhibited the greatest fondness for this instrument, as giving freest scope to his flow of ideas. His reputation began to grow rapidly; and the choice of many positions was soon open to him, and in 1707 we find him settled as organist at Mulhausen, where he married a distant relative of the same family name, who subsequently bore him seven children. She died in 1720 very unexpectedly, her husband making a short tour, leaving her in good health, and finding her buried on his return. He again married a year and a half later, his second wife being a fine soprano singer, who bore him thirteen children. Thus, this patriarch had twenty children, some of whom were geniuses, and one was an idiot. The second wife was a cultivated musical nature, and a noble helpmate to her husband in his career. It is an indelible stain upon the city of Leipzig that, after the death of the great master, she was suffered to die a pauper. The children by the first marriage, however, seem to have been the true inheritors of their father's genius; for among these were Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philip Emanuel Bach. To return to our young artist's career. In 1714, he was appointed director of the court concerts at

Weimar, and, from this time, his reputation was firmly established; yet, either because he was not worldly-wise or because he lacked influential protectors, he seems to have been unsuccessful in his application for several musical posts in this part of his career.\* In 1717, before the King of Saxony, Bach proved himself so much the superior of Marchand, the French virtuoso, that the latter ran away rather than hazard a formal contest, to which he was challenged. Subsequently, Bach became Kapellmeister to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen, and for six years continued in this post, which seems to have been one of the pleasantest.

The most important event of Bach's career took place in 1723, when he was appointed "Cantor" and musical director of the Thomas-Schule in Leipzig, a post which he held until his death. He received honorary titles and distinctions from many noblemen subsequently, but none of these brought any money with them; and, spite of his great reputation, Bach's income was always a modest one, especially when we think of the family which he had to support. In 1747 occurred Bach's famous visit to Berlin. His second son, Carl Philip Emanuel, had been appointed chamber musician to Frederic the great; and this celebrated monarch frequently expressed the wish to him that

\* He certainly failed, both in Hamburg and Halle, and in both cases inferior organists received the appointment.

his talented father should pay a visit to him at Potsdam. After repeated invitations, Bach set out upon the journey, and upon arriving at the palace was shown every honor. Many are the accounts which survive of the wonderful exhibitions of power which Bach gave on this occasion, such as extemporizing a fugue on a subject which the king gave him, and finally improvising even a fugue in six voices. It was Bach's last journey. He was in feeble health, and the excitement must have been too much for his frame. His eyes, which had always troubled him,\* now began to fail altogether. Two attempts at restoring his sight not only failed, but reduced him to total blindness. A six months' illness followed, when his sight suddenly returned, but the emotions caused by this were so violent that he became delirious, had a fit of apoplexy, and suddenly expired at half-past eight on the evening of the 28th of July, 1750. The family dispersed after his death, some of them being reduced in later years to extreme poverty.

Bach's career was a model of a pure, innocent, and exemplary life. Modest in the highest degree, he was frequently pushed aside by artists greatly inferior to himself. He was not a milksop, either; for, in directing music, he would maintain a firmness which could not be overborne, and would fight valiantly for an

\*Some biographies ascribe this to the moonlight copying of his brother's manuscripts, but he had used them mercilessly in other studies as well.



artistic point, where a personal matter would be allowed to pass uncontested. He was a model father, carefully educating his large family, and giving them moral guidance. He was deeply, but not ostentatiously religious. He might have made a fortune, had he turned his talents into the operatic channel, the most profitable at that day; but his conscientious scruples forbade. Although never possessed of a large income, he had enough for his simple tastes. His life was tranquil; and its only troubles were those which naturally would come in the domestic circle,—the death of wife, of many of his children, the idiocy of his son David and his death at the age of fourteen. Such were the simple afflictions which came upon him before his final blindness and illness, and these were met with a fortitude born of religious faith. To him more than to any other great musician may be applied Gray's lines:—

“ Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife  
His sober wishes never learned to stray;  
Along the cool sequestered vale of life,  
He kept the noiseless tenor of his way.”

## XIV.

### THE SONS OF SEBASTIAN BACH.

BACH's influence upon music by no means ended with his death; for, while Handel left no direct followers in his school, Bach left not only the numerous family spoken of in our last chapter,—ranging in intellect from idiocy to genius, several of whom he had carefully instructed in all the details of his art,—but also many pupils, who became the disciples of their master's system and spread it abroad. If Bach's mantle did not descend to any one follower, at least there were many after his death who could truthfully claim to possess a portion of it; and some of them (notably his third son, Karl Philip Emanuel Bach) were honored by the world in a higher degree than their father and preceptor. The fame of the followers, however, was evanescent; and the world gradually came to recognize the value of the stream (or *Bach*) at its fountain-head. It is singular, also, that the stream which seemed so broad in the middle of the last century should have abruptly vanished in this. A single grandson, a talented musician, Frederic William Ernst Bach, dying in 1843, brought the musical line of the Bachs, the glory

of centuries, to a close. Nevertheless, before this took place, the influence of Bach's descendants was considerable, and especially interesting in this,—that it marked the transition from one art epoch to another, from polyphony to homophony, from counterpoint to harmony. Such great epochs are rare in the history of art,—epochs in which the entire musical taste of the world underwent a change. Such an era was it when the Flemish school of composers, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, changed the music of Europe from the simple unison progressions or the empty fifths and fourths of Hucbald to the intricate but interesting contrapuntal forms which found culmination in the wonderful works of Palestrina, and, in a more modern sense, in the oratorios and cantatas of Bach. Such an era it was, also, when the intricacies of the sixteenth century composers were met by the melodic and emotional amateurs who in Florence, just before the year 1600, evolved Italian opera.

Equally marked was the change which took place between the years 1750 and 1775, when intellectuality in instrumental music began to yield to emotional power; and in the change some of the sons of Bach were important factors. The eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, was both a genius and a scamp. Inheriting his father's musical powers, had he but possessed with them his parent's sobriety, steadiness of purpose, and artistic zeal, he might have furnished an

instance, found very seldom in music,—as with Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, for example,—of father and son being almost equally gifted. Wilhelm Friedemann Bach was born in 1710 at Weimar. His father always had for him an especial affection, and seems to have bestowed the greatest care upon the cultivation of those musical talents which the boy possessed in a remarkable degree. The boy, on his part, learned easily, too easily, and became without effort a master of clavichord and organ; the most difficult contrapuntal studies had no terrors for him. The six sonatas for two pianos (with pedal obligato), which his father wrote for him during his twelfth year, prove how technically advanced he must have been. He received instruction upon the violin from Graun, and became a superb player upon this instrument also. He is said to have been the greatest organist of his time, and also in his musical improvisations he was unrivalled. As a mathematician, he was also regarded as a marvel. Philip Emanuel Bach could well say of him, "He could fill our father's place better than all the rest of us put together." And all these noble gifts and enormous talents led but to poverty and a miserable death. He attained the position of organist in Dresden in 1733, and later a similar post in Halle. In the latter city, he wrote more than thirty cantatas in the vein of his father. He had, however, fallen on evil times. Already the taste of the public had begun to turn away

from the severe school of contrapuntal work, and all his abilities were regarded by the inhabitants of Halle with more of wonder than of true appreciation. This in turn made him opinionated and pedantic. A love of drink made him less careful than ever. Fits of abstraction made him unreliable, even in the service of the church. In the midst of all this, he must needs marry; and his vices and weaknesses carried their blight into other lives. He soon lost his position in Halle, and never found another permanent one. Never did so great an artist sink so low. From day to day, the family suffered either from hunger or from the drunken abuse of its reckless head. He sold his father's manuscripts, with utter disregard of the value of the legacy over which he had charge; while, on the other hand, his brother, Philip Emanuel, carefully preserved and catalogued his share, and transmitted them to posterity. Pecuniary help was given from his family, but the erring brother was irreclaimable. By playing violin at taverns and with street bands, an unstable existence was eked out. Occasionally, if he could be brought into condition for it, a concert was given, and on these occasions his slumbering talent would sometimes burst forth with unexpected and dazzling brilliancy. He moved about from town to town with the erratic impulses of a gypsy, and deeper and deeper he sank, with an utter carelessness of duty that was most pitiable to contemplate. In one thing only was he

steadfast: he would not attempt to alter his style of composition to suit the changing taste. This man, seemingly without honor of any kind, seemed to make it a point of honor to sustain unaltered the old polyphonic vein which had been his father's glory. It was a genius of a great school born a trifle too late. He died a very pauper the first of July, 1784.

Of totally different mould was the third son,\* Karl Philip Emanuel Bach, whose fame, during his lifetime at east, was above that of any member of the entire Bach family. He was born March 14, 1714, in Weimar. He studied philosophy and law in different schools and universities; but the musical training he had received from his father (he says of himself, "In composition and clavichord-playing, I have never had any teacher but my father") soon bore the noblest fruit. It is, however, not quite true that he studied music only as a recreation in his youth. He himself states that all his desires were early trained in the direction of music as a life-work, and that all else was merely a secondary object to him. He attained a high position even from the beginning of his career; and, at thirty-two years of age, we find him appointed pianist (or clavicembalist) to Frederic the Great, in Berlin, where it was his duty to accompany the king, who was a passionate flute-player, in his various solos upon that instrument. Philip Emanuel Bach was not

\* The second son died in infancy.

greatly inferior to his brother Wilhelm Friedemann in talent, and he was infinitely his superior in keenness of insight, in tact, and in practicality. He saw intuitively that the old clavichord was changing its character, and that a new style of music must be evolved for it. In his pioneer efforts in this direction, and in his establishing the principles of scale-fingering for the first time, he made a higher technical plane of work possible, and fairly won the title of "the father of modern pianoforte playing." The first systematic efforts toward the melodic and homophonic school of composition (outside of mere dance forms) are also found in his works; and the rondo in his hands became a real musical form, and not a series of monotonous repetitions.

Although his chief reforms were in the direction of clavichord music, yet his influence upon the German song was not much less marked. The ode, which was the chief musical expression of poetry outside of opera, had sapped the life out of German vocal music, as we shall see in the next chapter; and almost all the songs which were not portions of larger works were without stamina, weak in their accompaniments and colorless in their melody. A close wedding of music and words was never attempted. Philip Emanuel Bach, if he had not the depth of genius which his father possessed, had at least that useful quality, good taste, and saw at once that a closer union must

be effected. While other composers of this epoch held any words to be good enough for musical setting, he acted up to his own maxim,—that, if the composer is not moved with his subject, he loses the power of moving others,—and sought out better poems and set them to more expressive music than his contemporaries did. His first great step in this direction was inspired by the religious training which he had received from his high-minded father during childhood, and which seems to have taken much deeper root in his nature than in that of his dissipated elder brother. When Gellert, in 1757, brought forth his collection of *Religious Odes and Songs*, Philip Emanuel Bach at once set them to worthy music; and, while the previous song accompaniments had been of a most meagre character, he gave to these a dignified support in the instrumental portion, thus bringing forth the germ of developed accompaniment, which in later years was the foundation of the German *Lied*. In whatever branch of musical composition this great talent worked, he always avoided the temptation to yield to displays of mere virtuosity. In his piano methods, in his sacred works, in his songs, the fundamental principle was always insisted upon,—that true feeling and emotion, not mere display, were the factors from which music was to draw its power; and in this, also, he was a most healthful influence against the tendency of his times, which, having lost the taste for



the intricate meaning of his father's music, had not yet achieved the melodic beauty and simple symmetry of Haydn or Mozart. In this, he was, if not the founder of the classical epoch of homophony, at least the pioneer who best prepared the way for it. Yet, although religious subjects seem to have attracted him most in his vocal work, he by no means neglected the secular song, and set nearly one hundred poems of this character, of widely differing scope. He did not, however, give birth to the true German *Lied*, as we know it to-day, but, as Bitter well says,\* produced works which were like fragrant flowers, blooming upon the edge of the grave toward which the contrapuntal music was going.

At fifty-four years of age, on account of the Seven Years' War, he left Berlin, and went to Hamburg, where a wider sphere was opened to him. The great Frederic had scarcely appreciated the value of this artist, and afforded him few opportunities to do more than play spinet or clavichord accompaniments to his flute solos, while he seemed to value Quantz and Graun in a much greater degree,—a fact which certainly, as regards the first of the two last named, proves that the royal flutist dabbled much more in music than his abilities warranted. Philip Emanuel Bach's work in Hamburg was much more varied and extended than it had been in Berlin, and his reputation chiefly rests

\* *Die Söhne Sebastian Bachs*, p. 27.

upon the works which he composed in that city. He is most frequently called the "Hamburg" Bach. He died in 1788, full of years and of honors. Were this work intended to deal with instrumental music in detail, much more would need to be said of this great man. His method for clavichord or piano has not yet lost its importance, and has influenced in a greater or less degree all the treatises on piano-playing which have followed it. His instrumental compositions, even while upholding the traditions of the old school, betray a romantic style which belongs to the new. His symmetrical forms were faithfully studied by Haydn, and unquestionably helped that great master in his efforts to establish the form which we now know as the sonata, but which in preceding times had been a varying and indefinable composition. Therefore, without being a great genius, Philip Emanuel Bach did as solid work in the advancement of music as some of those whom the world places in the leading ranks of fame. The other brothers did not achieve nearly so much, nor was their work so original.

Johann Christian Bach, the eleventh son of the great Bach, is known as the Milan or London Bach, because his life was chiefly spent in these two cities. He was the opposite of the two brothers of whom we have already spoken. Light-hearted, gay, and a man of the world, he soon formed connection with Italian singers, and gave himself up to the light, frivolous, but

tuneful Italian vein then in vogue. He was the successor of Handel in London, the queen's music teacher, praised by the poets and petted by the society of his day. He earned a very large income, but managed to spend it all, and more, and died deeply in debt; but his wife received a royal pension, which protected her from want. He cared not at all for the traditions of his art, as is proven by his answer to the friend who spoke to him of his brother Philip Emanuel Bach and his ability: "My brother lives to compose, while I compose to live!" and the reply to this brother himself, who wrote, "Don't become childish," to which the response was, "If I stammer, the children will understand me better." He was, however, dissatisfied with his own work; for sometimes he would say after some thoughtful improvisation at the piano, "This is the way I would play — if I dared!"

John Christoph Frederic Bach was born in 1732, and at twenty-four years of age became music director of Count Schaumburg at Bückeburg, which position he contentedly held until his death at the age of sixty-three, and was an industrious composer in all branches of music; his son was the last musical descendant of the great musical family. If he did not attain to the great talents of some of his brothers, at least he seems to have been the heir of his father's sweet, contented, and pious disposition; and this placed him higher upon the scroll of happiness than upon that of fame.

As the Bach family died out after a period of splendid achievements, so gradually also decayed the school with which the Bach name is associated. Its works will always remain a keen enjoyment to the thoughtful musician and a valuable study to all who practise our art, but it will never be imitated by moderns any more than the lofty tragedies of Racine or the grand epics of Milton will be copied by creators in literature. It is a noble legacy; and the world, even at this late day, does not fully appreciate how much it owes to the labors of John Sebastian Bach, his numerous disciples, and his four differently endowed and strangely dissimilar musical sons.

## XV.

### ODES, ARIAS, AND JUVENILE SONGS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE eighteenth century was by no means a pleasant or prosperous period in German vocal music. The attempt to establish German opera had proved futile, and Italy held undisputed sway in all the realm of vocal music. Naturally, therefore, the grand aria form which originated in that country was reproduced in Germany. It generally had the following shape:—

1. An instrumental introduction (often called "Symphony" \*).
2. The principal theme or melody, with a modulation into the dominant, or, if the work was minor, into the relative major.
3. A return, with variations and embellishments, to the key of the tonic.
4. A short instrumental postlude.

\*The word "Symphony" before Haydn's time had a very vague meaning. It was applied to preludes, interludes, and postludes; and it will be found with this significance attached to the "Pastoral Symphonies" in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Handel's *Messiah*. Since Haydn's time, it has a definite meaning, signifying a sonata for orchestra, generally in four movements.

This was the first section, which was strongly contrasted with a second section formed as follows:—

1. A short and quiet instrumental introduction.
2. A gentle and simple melody, generally *cantabile*, in a related key.
3. Again a postlude (sometimes omitted).

After this came a repeat of the entire first section, sometimes unaltered, in which case the words *Da capo* (first used in music in 1696) were written, at other times made more florid and intricate, in which case, of course, the melody was written out in full. This form, under one name or another, had, with slight deviations, become the most used shape of the world in both vocal and instrumental composition, and our musical readers can discern its influence in almost all drawing-room *morceaux* of to-day. It was not bad in itself, for it admitted of some well-drawn contrasts of key and style; but it led gradually to a putting of the cart before the horse, a fitting of the shape of the poem to the pre-ordained shape of the music. This domination of the art of poetry by music (in the conjunction of the two) would not have existed had Germany possessed any great lyric poets at this epoch. Whenever great poets arise, they wield a direct influence upon the song forms of their nation, and great song composers always follow in their wake. But Germany had no poets of eminence who cared to work in the smaller forms. Lessing and Schiller both sought to charm or instruct

in the larger forms only; and a host of poetasters who wrote short poems for music, to order, only made matters worse by impressing the doctrine, practically, that any poems would do for musical treatment,—that the charm of a song lay in the music only. These latter-day laborers on Parnassus gave rise to the “ode,” which was very different from the “aria” above described, being only a poem set to a tune, which was repeated as many times as there were verses. Sometimes these jingling works had as many as fifteen or twenty verses; and, although the sentiment of the poetry might change as much as it pleased, the music remained fixed and immutable in its dreary round. The accompaniment was generally figured in thorough-bass, only the fundamental notes being given; for then, far more than now, every musician was supposed to be able to read ordinary thorough-bass figuration at sight. Toward the close of the century, however, a simple “harp” (or broken chord) accompaniment came into use. The thought that it was the mission of the accompaniment to do something more than accompany the voice had not yet arisen.

Yet there were remonstrances raised occasionally against this inartistic treatment of song forms. Matheson raised his voice against this crude style of work, and demanded that composers should unite poetry and music more closely; but the call was more theoretical than practical, for there was really nothing

to unite. Dull words and dull music could not result in a very brilliant marriage. If the melody was tuneful and singable, if the poem was metrical and scanned properly, the mission of both was held to be fulfilled. If in the aria music ruled over poetry, in the ode the latter took revenge, for the poem was allowed to take the lead, and no one dreamed of intensifying it or heightening its effect by any especial tone colors or progressions. What these poems were may be guessed at from their titles. Odes to Death, to Friendship, to Resignation, to Hope, to Despair, to Night, to Morning, and to a thousand other topics which the boarding-school miss now treats of in her graduation essay, were then poured forth with a pedantry that seemed to be inexhaustible. The writer has in his possession a volume containing odes to White, Black, Green, Yellow, Violet, Blue, Gray, and Lavender, some of which are treated of to the extent of twelve verses each, the tunes having rarely more than sixteen bars, which are repeated over and over until the essay is done. The ingenuity of the poetaster was worthy of a better cause; but, naturally, the musician could draw no inspiration from such a barren soil. A bacchanalian song in which all the verses bore a kindred sentiment might suit to such treatment, and therefore we find the students' songs among the most effective of this epoch. The dreariness even extended into the domain of children's songs. Juvenile songs



may be said to have had their beginning in the last century; for, before that time, the songs of Germany were chiefly cast in the sacred mould, and in the fiery days of the Reformation the songs of the adults were held to be equally proper for their progeny. In ancient days, children's music, although existing, was never dignified into an especial branch of composition. In the days of the most ancient Romans, the praises of Romulus and Remus were chanted by children in public on festive occasions; but, when one remembers the severity of Roman school training, one rather doubts if the children were especially festive on these occasions. In the early days of the Christian Church, children's music was held to be a valuable adjunct of the religious service, and led to the turning of the orphan asylums, for which the Christians were so famous, into incipient conservatories, in which children were taught hymns. When we recall the fact that the switch of *St. Gregory* is still exhibited in Italy, and that he was a music teacher in these asylums in the sixth century, we can readily surmise that many a juvenile howl was intermingled with the music, and that all was not always pure harmony. Nevertheless, the result must have been successful even in the earliest days, for we find the wise Emperor Julian, whom history delights in branding as "the apostate," trying to build up the ancient Roman rites by calling in the aid of children and youth in the musical services

by founding a conservatory in Alexandria, where they might be appropriately trained. The scheme was only thwarted by his untimely death. Guido of Arezzo also, in the eleventh century, trained children in the way they should go, musically, by teaching a simple method of vocal sight-reading, and to that end inventing those vocal syllables which have come down to us, almost without a change, from the dark ages.

But none of these epochs can properly be given as having originated children's music. They taught children music, to be sure; but it was labor, unremitting and constant, that they demanded. The music was to please, not the young singers, but more critical ears, and to form a part in a service and pageant made for adults. In the eighteenth century, however, the idea arose of systematically writing music to please children, of bringing the joys of our art to even the youngest, in order that they might grow up with a spontaneous love for the art. It does not seem to us that the plan was very clearly followed; for the dismal odes to "Death" and to "Piety" which we find in the earliest collection of children's songs could scarcely awaken childish glee of a very exuberant sort, however edifying they may have been. Nevertheless, the plant, although unpromising, bore very good fruit. All the kindergarten music of the world, and all the noble efforts of the best German composers (such as Reinecke, Schumann, Taubert, Kullak, etc.) to educate

a true taste in children by accustoming them to proper musical forms and worthy harmonie during early years, sprang from these crude beginnings of the eighteenth century. We may complain that juvenile music of such a sort has not yet been estimated at its true value in America; that our composers still feel it beneath their dignity to try to minister to the young tastes that must be fed in the simpler forms; that, when music books are made for children among us, they consist of musical "baby-talk" which any well-regulated child would resent. But we are dealing with the eighteenth century, not with the faults of the nineteenth. Among the first collections of juvenile songs ever published was that of Johann A. Hiller. Many were the morals inculcated in the songs. For example, one would not consider the following a very cheering or appropriate theme for children to-day:—

#### TO DEATH.

Old men have perished  
Who were not cherished,  
For whom no lofty nature grieved.  
When in death they were lying,  
Men said, but without sighing,  
"Quite long enough, for sure, they've lived."

Be my endeavor  
To fail thus never.  
If I die young, let some be grieved.  
Let good deeds never fail me,  
Let pious men bewail me,  
And say, "Oh, had he longer lived!"

This poem, by Weisse, is one of the collection; but, fortunately, not all were tuned to such a doleful key, and in some matters Hiller seems to have had at least a theoretical idea of the exigencies of the case. For example, he states in his preface: "Songs for children must be very easy: they must be flowing, natural, free from pedantry [*ungekünstelt*], and of limited compass, not to exceed the strength of the children. Besides this, there should be something genial and attractive about them, that they may be easily caught up and retained in the mind. The peculiarity of all good songs, that the melody shall closely follow the expression of the words, must not be neglected even in these works."

How little these admirable theories were followed out is self-evident, but, at least, Hiller was wise in making the accompaniments musical; and he excuses himself for this by saying that, as children learn to sing much more easily than to play, he has made the accompaniment for older and more practised hands, while the melodies are simple enough to fit to youthful singers, although the compiler and composer disclaims the intention of writing only for the youngest children, but claims that many of his songs will suit children of a larger growth. In any case, we can commend Hiller for having kept a certain dignity in the treatment of his subject, which not all of his followers achieved, as, for example, J. F. Reichardt, who in his collection of

children's songs published in 1781, begins with the following twaddle:—

TO CHILDHOOD.

My intention in the publishing of these songs, dear children, is to cheer you up, that you shall endeavor to learn to sing clearly and well.

But, before one gives one's self trouble about any matter, one desires to know of what use it is! Is it not so, my loves? See, then, I will explain it to you at once, how useful and agreeable it is to sing clearly and correctly.

Often in church you are disturbed by the totally false and ill-sounding screaming of children, and even by older people; and you look round, and sometimes even laugh. Are you not worried by this, and troubled in your own singing because of it, my dears?

There is much more of the same style of infantile jingle; but, fortunately, the songs are somewhat better than the nauseating preface.

It is noticeable that many of these composers did not make any great distinction between the children's song and the folk-song. It is only another instance of the vast and wide-spreading influence of the folk-song. Not only children's music took root in it, but also the chorale, and finally the perfect flower of German vocal music,— the *Lied*.

The eighteenth century, however, was not very prolific in folk-songs until toward its very close. The composers had all become more or less artificial. It

was a transition epoch, as a whole. Spite of Bach and his sons, counterpoint had lost its hold upon the popular taste, and the true melodic grace of Haydn and Mozart had not yet been spread abroad. The pedantic complexities of the poets had crushed out what little individuality there might have been in the music. Germany stood far behind France and Italy and even England in song forms at this time, and the third quarter of the last century is as uninspiring a portion of musical history in Germany as one can possibly imagine. It was, however, the dark hour before dawn. The glories of the contrapuntal epoch had departed, but a bright day of other musical achievements was to begin. A whole host of great song composers were soon to arise and lift the standard of German song from the dust where it had been trailing, and bear it in the very front of the army of musical progress.

## XVI.

### HAYDN, MOZART, AND BEETHOVEN.

THESE three names represent the rise, progress, and culmination of the sonata form in instrumental music, exactly as the names of Schubert, Schumann, and Franz represent the same conditions in the history of the German *Lied*. It will scarcely be necessary, in a work of this character, to enter into the details of their lives; and even their influence upon German song cannot be collectively estimated in a single chapter.

To Haydn is due the credit of first making the accompaniment an important factor in the musical picture in German song. Gluck had, to be sure, already pointed the way in opera, and had conveyed emotions of graphic force entirely by the orchestral support of the voice. Such a touch was it when Orestes, having murdered his mother, and racked by conflicting emotions, exclaimed, "At last, peace enters in my soul," while the violas went on muttering and groaning, proving to the poetic auditor that the wicked one had but mistaken exhaustion for peace. Such a master stroke was it also in the opera of *Orpheus*, when that hero approached the gates of Hades, and, as the chorus an-

nounced the approach of a mortal, the contrabasses, by fierce, upward swoops, imitated the hoarse barking of the dread guardian of the gates of the infernal regions, the three-headed dog, "Cerberus, cruel monster, fierce and strange."

Such a sense of the importance of accompaniment was it which led Gluck to support the solos of Orpheus with harp, although that instrument before Erard's great improvements (made in 1810) was one of the crudest that could be imagined, and almost diatonic in character. All these great reforms are due to Gluck, but it was Haydn who introduced them into German vocal music; and they attained their culmination, so far as the last century is concerned, in the *Creation* (first produced in 1798), the accompaniments of which are a constant succession of tone pictures from beginning to end. As examples taken merely at haphazard, we may mention the surging of the waves at "Rolling in foaming billows," the tranquil flow of the brook at "Softly purling, flows on," the winding passages at "In serpent error, rivers flow," the groans of the contrabassoon at "By heavy beasts the ground is trod"; a hundred other equally realistic passages could be cited. It was the beginning of a new school. The value of a developed accompaniment had been recognized, and the road was open toward the ideal of the German *Lied*, a well-rounded picture in both vocal and instrumental tones.



Haydn did yet more: he led the way toward German national music. In this, again, we find him not entirely an originator, but a great developer of the thoughts of others. As he drew the idea of his accompaniments from Gluck, and found the germ of sonata form in Philip Emanuel Bach, so he received his grandest vocal inspiration, as portrayed in a single short work, from England. During his stay in London, he had observed the deep emotion caused among Englishmen by the performance of their national anthem, the greatest that the world possesses. It made a profound impression upon him, and he determined, upon his return to his country, to make a similar gift to his native land. A hymn, written by Haschka, somewhat altered subsequently, served him for inspiration, and the first great German national song—"Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser" (God save the emperor)—was composed amid the stirring events which followed the French Revolution, and which plunged Austria into a succession of sanguinary wars. It was first sung on the emperor's birthday, Feb. 12, 1797, and spread like wildfire. The kinship with "God save the King" cannot be questioned, and the work suggests the English anthem strained through a German mind. It was Haydn's favorite work. Not only did he make it the nucleus of a set of masterly variations in one of his most famous quartets, but almost his last musical act was connected with it. On May 26, 1809, as he lay on

his death-bed, he called his servants around him, and, having been carried to the piano, played this hymn three times over with great solemnity. He died five days after,— May 31, 1809.

Mozart's influence was exerted chiefly in the direction of operatic music, and in this he made a distinct advance over all his predecessors. Naturally, he followed the course laid open by Gluck's works; but he went far beyond that master in giving meaning to accompaniment and melody both. Over and above this, he was a composer who knew most thoroughly the capabilities of the voice; his works, therefore, are as singable as any in the Italian school. He was always ready to accept the suggestions of singers, and fit any aria that he had composed to their voice and style. His accompaniments were full of dramatic effect, so that even the effects of the *Leit-motif*, which many imagine to have arisen with Wagner, may be found in his works. Such an intricate orchestral combination, for example, as is introduced at the *finale* of the first act of *Don Giovanni* was unheard of in opera before his time. In this wonderful movement, we have a simultaneous combination of 3-4, 3-8, and 4-4 rhythms, which even Berlioz, with all his striving for complex rhythms, could not equal. Mozart leaned chiefly to the Italian school in his vocal works (since that school has ever been the most singable), but the influence of Gluck is marked in his works, and his latest operas, particularly the

*Magic Flute*, are in an individual manner which is entirely his own, and which may be called the very beginning of true German opera. Such arias as those of Sarastro, full of dignity and solemnity, and those of Papageno, with their *Gemüthlichkeit* and heartiness, are Teutonic to the backbone. It is not strange that the latter have been sung by the people to such an extent as to become actual folk-songs. Mozart could have been a great power in the direction of elevating the German folk-song; but the truth must be spoken that he cared very little for the worth of the words which he set to music, and in some few cases his subjects were beyond the line of decency. His single songs, when in the popular vein, seldom aspired to anything higher than Viennese *couplets*. Mozart, viewed purely from the vocal side, deserves the high praise of having been the first (and perhaps the only) German who thoroughly combined dramatic effect with a true vocal treatment of his voices. We shall find that later German composers have surpassed him in dramatic power, but it is doubtful if any have equalled him in the singable character of his operatic arias.

Before dismissing this great name from our history, it may be proper to rebuke those biographies which, for romantic reasons, throw a haze of mystery around his death. It is undoubtedly true that, just before his final illness, a stranger came to him, with some degree of secrecy, for a requiem; that, after some

time, Mozart became imbued with the idea that the requiem would be his own, and that it eventually became so. But the records of disease contain many a case where the imagination, working upon an enfeebled frame, has succeeded in fulfilling a preconceived idea. Some of the biographies end their account of Mozart's life with a delineation of the death-bed scene where the *Requiem* was sung, as if it were the fulfilment of a strange prophecy, without adding the prosaic fact that the stranger subsequently took the requiem he had ordered and paid for it. The mystery unravels itself still more when we learn that the stranger was Leutgeb, the steward of Count Walsegg, who had it performed in 1793 in memory of his wife. The secrecy attending its purchase is easily understood, when it is discovered that the count before the performance copied out all the score, and marked it "composed by Count Walsegg"! The act of this noble plagiarist led to many doubts as to the *Requiem* being a true composition of Mozart, doubts which were happily set at rest by the eventual discovery of original parts of the score.\*

Beethoven, the greatest name in all musical history, does not require much space in this. For, firstly, his life is well known in its important details to every musical reader; and, secondly, he has exerted no very

\*It is well known that some portion of the work was filled in after Mozart's death by Süssmayer his pupil.

great influence on German vocal music. Beethoven's greatest works are in the classical instrumental forms; and, beside these, his vocal compositions grow comparatively weak. It is singular that his eulogists do not more frankly admit this fact. Just as all persons think unconsciously in some language, great composers receive their musical thoughts through the medium of some instrument or voice. Schumann thought piano, Schubert thought voice, Beethoven thought orchestra. Not any musical idea came to Beethoven through the imagination of a human voice: every thought came clad in an orchestral garb. It was this self-acknowledged fact which made the master's piano sonatas broader than the instrument for which they were composed. It is this which suits the works composed for the tiny instruments of the beginning of the century so admirably to the concert grands of to-day, and makes them easily susceptible of orchestration; but it was this, also, which made his vocal works at times entirely unvocal, and deprived the great musical thoughts presented by Beethoven in his oratorio of *The Mount of Olives*, his great Mass in C, and the choral *finale* of the Ninth Symphony, of real and lasting influence among singers. A clarinet can give a high note or a series of them without its quality in subsequent passages being impaired; it is about as easy for a contrabassoon to give its deepest C as its deepest D; but the voice is a living thing, and may not be treated in

in this manner. When Beethoven in the Ninth Symphony gave a theme upon instruments and allowed voices to develop and vary it, he reversed the order of things; and, although the idea of combining voice and orchestra in symphony was a lofty one,\* which Liszt and Berlioz have copied to advantage, although the manner in which the work is carried over a bridge of contrabasses from the instrumental to the vocal portion is superb, and although the thoughts themselves are of the most glorious order, the vocal parts remain unsatisfactory, because unsingable. And this would be the case still, even if a transposition of a semitone downward were to restore our high modern pitch to the lower diapason of the composer's time.

*Fidelio*, however, in its second act, and in the chorus of its first act, brought an intensity to the operatic stage which was unknown before; and, had not Rossini's baleful genius held the advance of opera in check for two generations, it might have led directly to that modern German opera, which, scarcely less defiant of vocal traditions, yet holds the world enthralled by the depth of its thought, the glow of its orchestration, and the wonderful interweaving of its accompaniments.

In the field of pure song, Beethoven made one reform which was important. Struck with the weakness

\* Particularly in the presentation of Beethoven's cherished fancy, the Millennium, as pictured in Schiller's "Ode to Joy."

of the repeating ode, mentioned in a previous chapter, yet not wishing to set the form aside, he used it with characteristic variations of accompaniment at each repetition. A model of this strophe form is to be found in the immortal cyclus, "An die ferne Geliebte" ("To the distant Loved One"); and in *Adelaide* we see the true development of accompaniment combined with dramatic expression. In the folk-song, Beethoven attempted various manners, but effected little. His Scotch folk-songs scarcely reproduced the Gaelic flavor, and his few attempts at the humorous folk-song were puerile compared with any of his other works. He was too lofty in ideal and aspiration to be able to descend to and sympathize with the people's life; and his deafness and sensitive nature precluded this, even had he wished it. In a word, then, Beethoven gave great and noble orchestral thoughts in the language of song, and in so far assisted the dramatic school. He did not found it, for that had been done by Gluck; but he spoke through it — sometimes with utter disregard of singers' larynxes — in a more earnest and intense way than had up to his time been deemed possible.

## XVII.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE GERMAN POETS ON MUSIC.

GERMAN songs languished under the barrenness of German poetasters during the larger part of the eighteenth century. Schiller had made his great successes in large epic and in narrative poems; and, although they were suited to cantata treatment only, the poverty of the poetic field led composers occasionally to set even these as songs. Thus, Schubert made a song nearly thirty pages in length out of one of Schiller's most graphic poems, "The Diver"; and the most effective setting of any of this poet's works in song form was made some years afterwards by the same composer,—the "Gruppe aus dem Tartarus." But Schiller's poems were far too ponderous for any song composer to use. They lacked direct force and condensation; they were filled with vivid contrast, and were dramatic in construction, but they had the fault that they left little for the composer to add. The ideal poem for musical setting, especially in *Lied* form, is



one which gives an impression only, rather than one which supplies all details, and Goethe was the first of the German poets to understand this need and tastefully to fill it. His "Erl-King" is a fine example of the new departure. In this, an entire tragedy is told almost wholly in dialogue. The ride through the night, the appearance of the Erl-King, the coaxing of the child, its fright and resistance, the father's half-hearted reassurances, and the final seizure of the soul of the child by violence, are all depicted, yet not in a manner to preclude music adding something to the partnership. The fierce gusts of wind, the gentle, enticing tones of the Erl-King, the wild homeward gallop, the shriek of the child, all these are only suggested by the poetry; but they are *pictured* in the music. Not only Schubert, but Carl Loewe, was inspired by this poem to a great musical production.

"Meeresstille und Glückliche Fahrt" is another poem by Goethe which has borne great results in music. In two stanzas, the poet pictures a scene akin to that given by Coleridge in portraying a lifeless sea in "The Ancient Mariner." It may be of interest to place the two passages side by side. Coleridge:—

"Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
 'Twas sad as sad could be;  
 And we did speak only to break  
 The silence of the sea.

. . . . .

"Day after day, day after day,  
 We stuck, nor breath nor motion,  
 As idle as a painted ship  
 Upon a painted ocean."

Goethe:—

"Tiefe Stille herrscht im Wasser,  
 Ohne Regung ruh't das Meer.  
 Und bekümmert sieht der Schiffer  
 Glatte Fläche rings umher.

"Keine Luft von keiner Seite,  
 Todessille fürchterlich;  
 In der ungeheuerern Weite  
 Reget keine Welle sich."

Which may be translated as follows:—

"Deepest silence rules the waters,  
 Without motion rests the sea.  
 And the troubled sailor gazeth  
 On the flat monotony.

"Not a wavelet e'en is stirring,  
 Not a breeze doth lift its breath.  
 O'er the whole wide, vast horizon  
 Broods a stillness as of death."

After this picture, Goethe makes a vivid contrast by picturing the springing up of a prosperous breeze, the hoisting of sails, and the speedy attainment of the desired haven.

Such concise descriptions could not but cause a musical response in the minds of composers, and we find the above poem awakening a whole series of musical representations, of which the three best are Beethoven's vocal setting (chorus), Schubert's song (solo), and Men-

delssohn's overture (instrumental). Thus, we see one poem exerting an influence in three different departments of music. One of the strangest misnomers in all music has occurred with Mendelssohn's overture on the above subject. The English have translated it "*A Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*," which leaves each auditor under the impression that a thoroughly joyous picture is being presented, while the words "*Becalmed at Sea, and Prosperous Voyage*," would present the tremendous contrast as the poet intended it.

Spite of Goethe's success in the short lyric form, of which he may almost be said to be the German founder, his greatest influence upon music (not, however, upon the *Lied*) was exerted through an extended and philosophical poem, *Faust*. Never in the history of literature has a subject been so vastly and variously treated by composers as this great work.

Gounod, in his favorite opera,\* has developed the amatory side only, and has properly brought melodic power to bear on the treatment of the section he has chosen to illustrate, in which Marguerite is a more prominent figure than Faust. Schumann has treated it in the ethical manner most consonant with the entire subject, and best reflects the Goethe ideal. Berlioz has seized upon fragments of the work, placed them together in most vivid contrasts, and brought forth its sensational characteristics, although his remodel-

\* Gounod's *Faust* is generally called *Margarethe* in Germany.

ling of the work has banished the poet's intentions in many places. Wagner has been moved by it to write his grandest purely instrumental work,—the *Faust* Overture. Liszt has taken the philosophical, lyric, and religious touches, and brought them to a deeper meaning by instrumental music,—in a symphony. Boïto has been moved to Grand Opera. In fact, the list is endless. Here, then, we have an example of a poet's thought awakening many of the greatest workers in a kindred art into activity; and we see in how many directions music and poetry unite. Yet there was an element in Goethe's *Faust* which was absent from the great works of Schiller or Lessing. The short lyric form which they discarded was introduced by Goethe profusely into this large work. The song of the rat, of the flea, the serenade, the King of Thule, "My Heart is heavy," and others, prove that Goethe knew the value of this condensed form; and these poems have been treated independently in music by many who have not essayed setting the entire work.

Goethe's poems at once drew composers away from the rigid "grand aria" form, and from the monotonous "ströphe" construction. *Durchcomponirung* (composition in which the music did not repeat with each verse, but had a changing character throughout) took the place of these inanities, and music was at once wedded more closely to poetry.

It is not within our province here to follow in detail the life of Goethe; yet it may be stated as a strange fact that, spite of the great influence that he exerted on music and the various musicians that he was thrown in contact with, his love for the art was not a strong or lofty one, nor could he appreciate the life-work of the composers. Mendelssohn was his friend rather because he was of a wealthy, influential, and cultured family than because of his musical abilities. He treated Beethoven shabbily; and, when Schubert sent him his setting of the "Erl-King," he took no notice of it, nor did he hear it sung at all until after the composer's short life was ended. He never assisted the career of any musician, and seemed to regard them all as unpractical beings and undesirable companions.

After Goethe, who may be styled the Jupiter of German poetry, there came a poet who was less philosophical and more human, less polished, but more passionate, less broad and majestic, but even more epigrammatic and concise. This was Heinrich Heine. Naturally, Heine wielded a yet greater influence upon the *Lied* than Goethe; and, in fact, no composer ever did such noble service to this form of music by his tones as Heine did by his poems. Heine himself says of Goethe's poems that they were like the statues in the Louvre,—of wonderful beauty, but cold and lifeless. Certainly, his own poems are pregnant with human passion, ardor, hope, exaltation, and despair. A recent

authority,\* taking Challier's voluminous catalogue of songs as a basis, made a calculation of the musical popularity of different German poets by the number of times their most popular lyrics had been set to music. The result was overwhelmingly in favor of Heine. Schiller was scarcely represented; while the comparison between Goethe and Heine can best be judged by the following list of seven popular poems, the figures representing the number of different musical settings each poem has received:—

Goethe: "Der du von dem Himmel bist," 50; "Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh'," 56; "Kennst du das Land?" 65.

Heine: "Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam," 74; "Ich hab' im Traum geweint," 81; "Leise zieht durch mein Gemüth," 85; "Du bist wie eine Blume," 167.

There were many influences which made Heine's poetry very intense. His religious struggle, swerving from Judaism to Christianity, first leaning toward one and then the other, yet not finding complete repose in either; his severe illness, by which he became semi-paralytic during the latter part of his life; his dissatisfaction with German conservatism and the phlegmatic nature of his compatriots,—in every direction, his was an unsatisfied, yearning, longing existence; and this he reflected, in all its phases, in his poems. Such a nature must be ranked as inferior to Goethe; yet it offered more to the most emotional of arts, music. If Goethe

\*The *Reichenberger Zeitung*.

was a philosopher, a calm reasoner, and above all national prejudice or enthusiasm,\* Heine was an impressionist, an enthusiast, and even a partisan. Naturally, the poems of this child of impulse are full of the most sudden changes, the oddest surprises; and these could be splendidly reflected in tones. If Goethe was able to give a powerful picture in a short poem, Heine was able to suggest a whole life history in a stanza or two. For example, the following short poem contains the essential points of hundreds of novels which run to octavo size in expressing their emotions and incidents:—

“A youth he loves a maiden,  
Another she doth prefer;  
But this one has chosen another,  
And given his heart to her.

“And when the maiden knows it,  
She takes, in anger deep,  
The first man in her pathway,  
And leaves the youth to weep.

“It is an old, old story,  
Yet it is ever new;  
And he to whom it happens,  
His heart-strings rend in two.”

Heine's influence, although spread among many composers, yet exerted its chief power upon one alone; but that one was the greatest of all the German *Lied* com-

\* Goethe has been reproached with never having helped his country with truly national poetry; but he felt that he belonged not to a nation, but to the world.

posers. Schubert died before Heine's works had become world-famous; yet the few that he did set to music—"Am Meer," "Die Stadt," "Das Fischer-mädchen," etc.—prove that he could have caught the composer's feelings in all their intensity and power. In setting Heine, he showed a tendency to change from the objective to the subjective school (as in "Am Meer" and "Ihr Bild"), so thoroughly did he sense the best mode of treatment for the most of these poems; but it was Schumann who brought the full glory of the musical side of Heine's poems to the hearts of the world. The works, as we shall see later, appealed to his own life-story, and his own passions coalesced at white heat with the intensity of the poet. In the union of Heine's poetry and Schumann's music, the German *Lied* reached its climax, and the sister arts were demonstrated to be true equals and companions.



## XVIII.

### THE LIFE OF FRANZ SCHUBERT.

THREE names stand forth in musical history as the great founders of the German *Lied*,—Schubert, Schumann, and Franz; but, strictly speaking, it was Schubert who was the pioneer and actual founder, the other two being the improvers and perfecters of the school. Schumann has won a leading rank in many fields of music; but Schubert and Franz owe their great reputation to their songs, spite of the instrumental works of the former and the retouching of old masters by the latter. Schubert was the most spontaneous composer that ever existed. If there ever existed a natural musician it was he. Liszt said of him that he was the most poetic of all musicians.

An inspired nature and a good voice were probably all the gifts that Providence allowed him; for his childhood was one that had little pleasure, his manhood was passed in the midst of pitiful privations, and his death occurred long before the world at large recognized his genius.

Franz Peter Schubert was born in a suburb of Vienna, Jan. 31, 1797, and was the son of a poor

school-teacher, who imitated Bach in two respects, the possession of piety and of children. Of the latter he had *nineteen*. The father endeavored to educate his children as best he could; and the boy Franz received, in addition to a school education, a training on the violin from his father and on the piano from his elder brother, Ignaz. Evincing a great taste for music, he was placed under Michael Holzer, the choir-master of the parish, who gave him a general musical education; but he soon outstripped even this master. Nature had not been prodigal to the boy. He was not only poor and one among many brethren, but he was ugly in appearance and very near-sighted. But the fact that he was endowed with a sweet voice and musical taste made his childhood pleasanter than it otherwise could have been. A friendship with a cabinet-maker, who frequently repaired piano-cases, gave him an occasional chance to play upon a better piano than the one he was obliged to use in his humble home; and his entrance into the village choir gave him a little well-earned pre-eminence, and led to higher things. At eleven, he was leading soprano (treble) in the choir, playing violin solos as they occurred in the service and occupying his spare time at home in composition. A little before his twelfth birthday, these talents secured him entrance to the Imperial *Convict*,\*

\*It is a strange error that some English biographers speak of Schubert's entering a *convict* school, without further explanation.

or school for the training of singers for the imperial court. Here he soon silenced those who were disposed to laugh at his uncouth manners by his musical superiority. An orchestra was formed by the older students; and, spite of Schubert's youth, he was admitted to membership. He also had a constant fever of composition, limited only by his inability to buy music paper. In the *Convict*, Schubert enjoyed in some degree the instruction of Salieri; but the master seems to have taken no especial interest in his pupil, and to have given but a little desultory advice. Had any one at this time given the lad thorough instruction in counterpoint, Schubert might have achieved great deeds in the instrumental forms. As it was, he only arranged to take a course in counterpoint just before his death. There were rigors enough attached to the life at the school,—a cold practice-room in winter, little food, long intervals between meals, and rather strict discipline. There is a pitiful letter existing from Schubert to his favorite brother, Ferdinand (Nov. 24, 1812), in which he begs for a few pennies to buy food and music paper, and quotes Scripture to enforce his petition. At this time, Mozart was his favorite composer; and Beethoven seemed to make him impatient because of his eccentricities. At a later epoch, he learned to give Beethoven his full due, and fairly idolized his works.

In 1813, change of voice took place with the youth:

and, although he would have been permitted to continue for a while in the school, he decided to leave, and prepare himself for teaching in his father's school,—not from any love of pedagogics, but because he might thus escape the conscription, which, forcing him into military service, would mar all his musical studies. Until the end of the year 1816, he continued in the thankless position of village schoolmaster, often allowing his impatience to find vent in corporal punishment of his unfortunate pupils. He poured forth, meanwhile, an uninterrupted stream of compositions. The chief fault of the early works was that they were too long and often too much in the blood-and-thunder vein; but now they took a finer shape, and the “Erl-King,” the “Songs of Mignon,” a couple of Masses of much worth (in G and B-flat) prove that the composer was beginning to master his powers. The numerous compositions were written without reference to publication, simply because the spirit moved him. Many of them were pledged by him for petty debts, and have been irrevocably lost. One opera was rescued from the Hüttenbrenner family (where it had been put in pawn for a debt), with the first act entirely gone, it having been used, page by page, to light the fire with by the servant.

If Schubert composed easily, he also forgot his works as easily. Many are the anecdotes which cluster around his compositions, which prove both facts.

Once, on hearing a song which he had written for the tenor Vogl a few days before, he praised it heartily, and demanded to know who had composed it. Another time, he finished a song ("Die Forelle," "The Trout") late in the evening, and in haste seized the sand to strew over the writing, which was not dry. Alas! the ink-bottle was the one he reached; and in a moment he had poured its contents over his work. On another occasion, returning from an early walk in the suburbs of Vienna with some friends, the party turned aside in one of the beer gardens along the road, to take their breakfast. On the table was a volume of translations of the poems of Shakspeare. Schubert seized upon it, and according to his habit began hurriedly turning the leaves. All at once he stopped, and, after reading a moment, burst out with, "Oh, if I only had music paper here, I have a melody in mind that would just suit this poem!" One of the friends at once took the bill of fare, and carefully ruled it off into staves. Schubert took his pencil, and, amid the clatter and confusion of a busy restaurant on a Sunday morning, wrote "Hark! hark! the Lark at Heaven's Gate sings," in less than twenty minutes.\*

Schubert's life now took a pleasanter direction, because a new friend and admirer, Von Schober, who had

\*Some writers have stated that the famous "Serenade" was thus composed. This is untrue. The facts are as above. The confusion has arisen from the fact that "Hark! the Lark," is also a serenade; *i.e.*, an *aubade*, or morning serenade.

a fairly lified purse, came to his rescue, and bore him away from school-teaching, insisting that he should live with him in Vienna, and devote himself entirely to composition. This was an existence entirely in accord with his tastes; and he now began to compose with fervor, and also to enjoy himself heartily with the circle of friends which he and Von Schober soon drew around them.

Spite of the many privations of Schubert's life,—poverty was never very far from the door,—it would be wrong to imagine that his was a wholly unhappy career. Almost the contrary is true. He had the merry, hearty, Viennese nature, an inordinate share of Bohemianism, and enjoyed himself royally when in the company of friends of his own kind. He could not bear the upper classes, they seemed unnatural to him, and he naturally gravitated toward those in lower station. One thing, however, he demanded: his boon companions must be something more than mere jolly natures; they must be artists in some direction,—poets, painters, musicians, or the like. His first question, on a new friend being introduced into the circle of which he was the acknowledged chief, was, "Kann er was?" ("Can he do anything?") and from this he soon received the nickname of "Kanevas," which, with the other nicknames of "the tyrant" (in allusion to his imperious authority with all his friends) and "Bertl," show how pleasant a bond the friendships must have

been. A friendship with the tenor Vogl was a very useful as well as agreeable one. Vogl's knowledge of literature led him to give Schubert some excellent advice regarding the choice of subjects for songs; and he also took Schubert, subsequently, on some vacation tours, which were the happiest events in the composer's life. But he did not have the courage to first introduce his works to the public. That honor belongs to another tenor, Franz Jäger, who sang "The Shepherd's Plaint" ("Schäfer's Klagelied") in a concert, where it made an instantaneous and complete success, it being the first work of the composer ever heard by the Viennese public. Schubert was the most impecunious of all the composers,—which is saying much,—and his circumstances prevented his seeking his fortunes about the world. Had he gone to England, his whole career might have been different; for the English, although not classed as a great musical nation, have been in many respects a very appreciative one, and their appreciation has generally been shown in the substantial form of bank-notes instead of the more ethereal fame upon which Germany has fed some of its famishing composers. As it was, Schubert was never beyond the Austrian dominions. A couple of trips to Hungary and three journeys to Upper Austria compose his travels.

The first journey to Hungary was made in 1818. Schubert had been so warmly recommended to Count

John Esterhazy that he was offered the position of music-teacher to his two daughters, at his château at Zelesz. This change was an important one for Schubert, since it brought him in contact with the Hungarian music, and influenced some of his later works. It was also pleasant in another way. The count had a good bass voice, the countess and her daughters were good altos and soprano, and a visitor to the family, Baron Schönstein, had a charming and expressive tenor voice. All loved Schubert's songs; and he not only had the pleasure of frequently hearing them well sung, especially by the baron, but could at times essay the performance of rather ambitious larger works. Nevertheless, he did not feel at home in his new surroundings, and gravitated gradually down to the society of the servants, accepting that low caste to which musicians in Europe were so readily relegated at the beginning of this century. He was too thoroughly Viennese to be happy away from the city and his circle of friends. He grew heartily homesick. An unfortunate tenderness for Caroline Esterhazy made him yet more unhappy, for of course he dared not speak it; but once, when she asked him why he had never dedicated anything to her, he blurted out: "For what purpose? It is all dedicated to you without that." The end of the year found him back in Vienna with his old friends, and the next year brought him the first of the upper Austrian trips with Vogl. A more glorious



time than our composer had it would be impossible to imagine. He was among just the hearty middle class whose company suited him the best, and they all appreciated him to the fullest extent. He composed but little during this happy epoch. The return to Vienna brought the circle together again; and many are the incidents recorded of the "Schubertiades," as the gatherings were called. It was an absolute brotherhood, a veritable artistic commune. All were poor, therefore all goods were held in common. Did one achieve the dignity of a new coat, any of the set (whom it fitted) might wear it when there was a necessity for making a good appearance. Hats, neckties, boots, were never considered as individual property. One of the friends being without a pipe, or the means to buy one, yet possessing some tobacco, took Schubert's wooden spectacle case, bored a hole in it, and, inserting a straw, was soon puffing away in contentment. The seasons of prosperity were equally abused by all. When Schubert once sold a large number of songs, although a period of famine had just been bravely passed through by the company, he insisted on buying tickets to Paganini's concert (at five gulden each) and giving them a musical feast with his money. The next day the famine was resumed.

With such irregular habits, one could easily foretell the end. The candle was burning at both ends furiously; and, with the excitement of composition and

the lack of needed repose, everything was tending to shorten the great composer's life. It is impossible, however, not to pity and even to love him. His nature was so tender with those whom he loved, especially with his brother Ferdinand, and he was so guileless in all the affairs of men that one sympathizes even while condemning. The publisher Diabelli managed to take advantage of his innocence, and buy a vast number of his most successful songs for eight hundred florins. "The Wanderer" alone, which was one of these, brought the publisher over thirty thousand florins. It was impossible to help such a nature. No previous engagements could take him from the circle of friends, when he was enjoying himself. Periods of pleasure were followed by periods of intensest gloom. All his applications for positions of permanency were in vain, and sometimes he even lost what little chance there might have been by ill-timed temper or severity.

Again (in 1824) he went into Hungary with his aristocratic patron, and again the composer's heart turned back to his beloved Vienna. After the return, another vacation trip with Vogl followed, in 1825; and this was as pleasant as the first one, but the return to Vienna brought more poverty than ever. At Beethoven's funeral, in 1827, he was one of the prominent mourners, but little thought how soon he was to follow. In this year also came the last gleam of sunshine in the short life. A journey to Grätz with Jenger, the pia-

nist, was full of delight, but was all too brief. Again, in Vienna, the load of poverty and debt was momentarily lightened by a most successful concert of his own compositions; but he was unfitted to keep money, and it flew away with wings, the flight being materially hastened by the demands of his creditors. The final illness set in very suddenly (of its details and progress we have elsewhere spoken\*); and on the 19th of November, 1828, the weary striving was at an end. Grillpärzer's epitaph on Schubert's grave epitomizes his fate better than any words of ours could do. It reads:—

“ The tone art buried here  
A rich possession and yet greater hopes.”

To which we may add a single line, which has been applied to another genius, who, like Schubert, was wild, irregular, loving, democratic, and sincere,— Robert Burns:—

“ The light which led astray was light from heaven.”

\* *Last Hours of Great Composers*, by L. C. Elson.

## XIX.

### THE WORKS OF SCHUBERT.

THE great masters in music have all, with the single exception of Chopin, achieved their reputation in various fields of composition; and mass and symphony, sonata and string quartet, opera and oratorio, were intermingled in their labors. Schubert also worked in all these different schools (except the last named), but his success varied widely in them. It may be summarily stated that his real influence was exerted only on vocal music, and beside his vocal works his instrumental compositions pale. This statement is not invalidated by the fact that he has added at least one masterpiece and part of another (the "Unfinished Symphony") to the symphonic repertoire, and that his string quartets are most enchanting in their contents. The sonata form, in which all the great instrumental works of Schubert's time were written, is not to be mastered without fluency in the art of counterpoint; and this, unfortunately, Schubert had not. He himself felt the lack of it, and shortly before his death arranged for a contrapuntal course with Sechter, the most celebrated

teacher in Vienna. The smaller forms, and especially the vocal forms, demand less of skill, and rely rather upon the poetic and imaginative qualities of the composer for their effect, than upon learning. The harmonic rather than the contrapuntal structure is present, even in Schubert's symphonies. The charm of even the greatest of his instrumental works is in the melodies themselves, in their contrasts, and not in their interweaving.

Something was gained by Schubert's sojourn in Hungary; the Magyar music often comes into prominence in his string quartets, his piano works, and his symphonies. The great Symphony in C major, for example, is so thoroughly in this vein that it has been thought by some commentators to picture gypsy life in Hungary.

The songs, however (of which Schubert composed more than six hundred), are of infinite variety; and even Beethoven, on his death-bed, recognized the divine fire in them. The prolixity which is a defect in the instrumental works of Schubert, and the incessant repetitions of which he seemed never to weary, are generally absent from the songs. His earliest vocal works have more than a reasonable length, and a decided leaning toward sensational effects; but these flaws are not apparent, even after his sixteenth year, save in his operas, and even here they are rather the result of the unfortunate librettos which he was obliged to

choose, because of his inability to secure better, than of any blood-and-thunder tendency of the composer. He was unable to seek out great dramatists, and could not, like Meyerbeer, purchase the services of a Scribe to assist him. Let any one examine the conglomeration of daggers, poison, tyrants, and persecuted innocence of the opera *Rosamunde*, and he will readily see why Schubert's operas have failed. Even the old axiom, "That which is too foolish to be spoken may be sung," has its limits; and these were passed in Mademoiselle von Chezy's sentimentalities as gushed forth in her operatic plots. The songs, however, had not these defects; for here Schubert was able to choose from a circle of poets, almost all personal friends, that would have inspired a composer of far less ability than his own. Von Schober, Müller, and Mayrhofer vied in writing verses for their prolific art-brother; and Vogl, although not able to originate verses, had the requisite culture to guide Schubert in the choice of the best poems of Goethe and other German writers. Before this time, he had endeavored to set some of Schiller's poems to music, undaunted by the length even of the most extended. We have already alluded to the fact that these were far better suited to cantata than to *Lied*, and Schubert's efforts in this direction brought forth little of permanent worth.

Goethe's innovations in poetic form probably first

gave rise to Schubert's departure from the old strophe style. Heine, also, exerted some influence upon our composer, but his greatest poems were written after Schubert's brief career had ended, and therefore one can only surmise what great heights he might have attained in setting such a powerful cyclüs of poems as "Poet's Love" (*Dichterliebe*) or "A Tragedy" (*Tragödie*). As it was, however, Schubert was the first musician to make thorough use of the cyclüs form. The cyclüs in vocal music may be compared to the suite, or even the symphony, in the instrumental field. In the latter, each movement is complete in itself, yet forms a part of a larger whole, just as Thorwaldsen's bas-relief, "Winter," a completed subject in itself, forms only a link in the set which is entitled "The Seasons." In the same manner, the single song of the cyclüs seems to be a unit; yet its enhancement by contrast and juxtaposition with other songs makes the perfection of a still larger form. Schubert's great cyclüs was "The Miller's Pretty Daughter" \* ("Die Schöne Müllerin"), which has all the requisites of dramatic unity, artistic contrast, and sustained interest. In the first number, "Das Wandern" ("Wandering"), we find the miller's apprentice tired of his surroundings, and learning to love a roving life from the restless rushing of the brook. From even the first song, the brook forms a fundamental feature of the work, and its undertone is heard in almost every number in the set. In this song,

\* Words by William Müller.

its voice (in the accompaniment) is bold, impetuous, and confident, as if counselling the young hero to go forth and give battle to the world. In the next song, we find the youth on his wanderings. Again there is a murmuring brook in the accompaniment, for he has discovered a half-hidden stream which purls and coaxes him to follow. The youth and the gently rippling accompaniment vanish in the distance, but in the succeeding song we find that the brook has led him to a secluded mill and a beautiful maiden. The murmuring waters are still his companion, for he confides his love to the brook; and, when his happiness is sealed by the sweet confession of returned affection, the lovers sit in happy tranquillity on its banks. Alas! the happiness of the youth is brief, for, in a rollicking, swaggering movement, a hunter appears in the dell, and at once induces the faithless one to transfer her changeable heart. Jealousy, pride, and despair follow in swift succession; and finally, in the bosom of the stream, the unhappy boy seeks eternal repose, while as a *finale* to the set, the loving waters sing his lullaby.

The brook and the mill-wheel have mingled their tones through the set, very much in the same manner as a *Leitmotif* runs through a Wagnerian opera; and it is astonishing to note in how many different emotions Schubert has pictured the sequestered stream. The voice of the waves seems always to have had a great attraction for him, judging by the many songs in which



it appears. In the "Fisherm maiden," for example, the tender poem by Heine has a light, barcarolle-like accompaniment. In the song entitled "Auf dem Wasser zu singen" ("To be sung on the Waters"), the waves seem to dance and glance in voice and accompaniment alike; and in "Die Stadt" ("The City") the steady splash of the oar of the boatman and the gray stillness of the waters at eventide are pictured with graphic power by a constantly recurring broken chord. One fact, however, in this connection, may be remarked: Schubert's water-pictures may be bright, as in "To be sung on the Waters," or gloomy, as in "The City"; they may be enticing, as in "Wohin," or they may be yearning, as in "Das Meer,"—but they are never tempestuous. Schubert had seen the Danube, and had sailed on the Austrian and Hungarian lakes; but he had never seen the ocean, and this fact can be traced in his music. There have been greater works in the cyclus form than "The Miller's Pretty Daughter" (in Schumann's works, for example); but we must always recollect that Schubert's was the first. It may also be noticed that the strophe form (repeating verses) is employed very freely by Schubert in this set, not as Beethoven had used it in "An die ferne Geliebte," with changes of accompaniment at each repetition of the melody, nor as Franz employed it some years later, with contrapuntal touches and changes at the last verse, but in the simple and crude manner of the eighteenth cen-

tury;\* yet the severest criticism would fail to find monotony in them, so powerful is genius to counteract the faults even of a weak form. This cyclis was composed in an incredibly short space of time, and was the most spontaneous of works, even of this fertile composer. Spontaneity is the chief characteristic of Schubert's songs. We come nearer to the soul of music in them than in the songs of any other composer; they are music itself; and, in studying them, we seem to enter with the composer into a purer atmosphere. Von Schober voiced Schubert's feelings toward art in his beautiful poem "To Music," and those who will seek this not widely known song will find in Schubert's setting a veritable musical creed and thanksgiving. The words are:—

"Thou holy Art, how oft in sad, gray hours,  
When life and all its cares pressed down on me,  
Hast thou upheld me with thy heavenly powers,  
And in a better world hast set me free!

"Oft has a tone from thy great harp immortal  
Lifted the sorrows from my aching heart,  
Unlocked for me of Paradise the portal.  
I thank thee for it now, O holy Art."

The use of *Leitmotif*—that is, a musical figure invested with a dramatic significance—by no means originated with Wagner, although he undoubtedly made

\* "Wandering," "The Morning Greeting," "The Miller's Flowers," "The Wicked Color," etc., may be cited as examples of strophe form.

the grandest use of it. In Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, one may find a thorough employment of *Leitmotif*; and some commentators (we think without sufficient evidence) ascribe the origin of such figures to the earliest Italian operas about A.D. 1600. It will therefore not surprise us to find such figures in Schubert's works. In the wonderfully dramatic song entitled "Atlas" there is a figure which typifies the restless struggle and straining of the world-bearing giant as perfectly as the loves of Siegmund and Sieglinde are pictured by Wagner in a few tones. Schubert could scarcely avoid employing such figures; for without being a great reformer, such as Gluck, Beethoven, Haydn, or Wagner, he perceived, with intuitive taste, that the accompaniment of vocal music needed to become a part of the picture, if true dramatic effect were to be attained. What Gluck had done for opera Schubert applied to song, but with even more than Gluck's taste and with infinitely more variety. The most unpromising subjects for accompaniment became transmuted in Schubert's hands from lead to gold. In the "Hurdy-gurdy Player" (often mistranslated "The Organ-grinder"), the tones of a cracked and worn-out hurdy-gurdy become a most realistic and poetic accompaniment to a song which almost typifies Schubert's own life. In "The Post," the gallop of the horses and the sound of the post-horn are interwoven in the accompaniment. In "The Tavern," a weary, slow accompaniment pict-

ures the fatigued life-wanderer nearing a graveyard, which he chooses as his tavern of rest.

Not only in dramatic accompaniments was Schubert pre-eminent, but he united the melody more closely to the spirit of the words than any one had done before his time. In the "Stormy Morning," turbulent unison passages and brusque transitions and skips give, in a few broad touches, a powerful picture of a winter storm. Most of the songs last mentioned belong to a cyclis much more sorrowful and gloomy than the one already described,— "The Winter's Journey." It is painful to think of Schubert, on his almost deserted death-bed, toiling away at the proofs of this sombre set.

We have not space in a single chapter to speak of each of even the most famous of the songs of Schubert. We might cite the "Wanderer's Night Song" as a model of epitomized music, "The Spectre" as one of the weirdest compositions ever written, "The Group from Tartarus," "An Schwager Chronos," and the "Harper's Songs" from *Wilhelm Meister* as examples of the loftier Greek and dramatic schools; — but it would be supererogatory. Sufficient has been said to show that Schubert's influence was far-reaching in every direction of vocal work; that he was really a pioneer, while not intending or aiming to be an actual reformer; and that his songs are not even now appreciated to their full extent in America, where the musical *bonbon*, the "Serenade," is too often held to be the greatest of the songs of this composer.

## XX.

### ROBERT SCHUMANN.

IN Schumann's vocal works, the German *Lied* reached its highest ideal. There were several causes for this. Schumann's nature was deeper and more intense than that of Schubert. He had lived a life-drama which demanded expression in tones, and could find it only in *Lieder*. Heine appealed more strongly to his imagination and poetic instincts than any other poet could, so that for Schumann there was but one true poetic outlet,—Heine; while, on the other hand, Heine found his only full musical interpretation in Schumann. In the union of these two, the German *Lied* achieved its fulness. Schumann's early life did not point in the direction of vocal music. He was not, like Schubert, a singer; and the entire bent of his musical inclination lay toward the piano. Schumann, the youngest of five children, was born at Zwickau in 1810, his father being a publisher in easy circumstances, founder of a large business house, which existed in Saxony until 1840. His father seems to have perceived the musical abilities of the boy, who already, in his eighth year, gave some indications of them. Im-

provisation (on the piano) seems to have been an easy matter with him, even in childhood ; for he frequently amused his elders by illustrating, musically, the characters of different people, and allowing his hearers to guess whom he meant. These early tone pictures are said to have been most amusing and lifelike, but of course were of the nature of a free fantasia, and everything in Schumann's musical work in early years seems to have been untrammelled and untrained. Rich thoughts grew up like natural verdure in a tropical garden, but weeds were inextricably mingled with the flowers. His first teacher, a self-made musician named Kuntsch, was not capable of understanding the luxuriant nature, far less of reducing it to order, and but little progress was made. Nevertheless, Schumann always gratefully remembered the teacher who first helped him on the road up Parnassus, and sent him a silver laurel wreath on the occasion of his jubilee celebration long after,—in 1850. Schumann's father soon saw that a higher course of study must be begun, if the boy were really to attain greatness, and made application to no less a musician than Carl Maria von Weber to undertake the training of the embryo composer. Why this scheme came to naught is a mystery which has not been unravelled, since it is evident that Von Weber consented to receive the pupil.

One incident made a great impression on Schumann at this time : he went to Carlsbad, to hear Moscheles

play, and was transported into an ideal fairy-land by this first glimpse of really artistic piano music. Thirty years later, this same pianist and composer dedicated to Schumann one of his finest works, the violoncello sonata, op. 121 ; and then the latter, now become the greater of the two, confessed that from that concert, in his childhood, he had treasured up a program which Moscheles had touched, as a sacred relic, little dreaming that he would ever be honored by such a dedication from such a source.

The father bought a grand piano for the boy (who seems indeed to have been a favorite with the entire family), and this added to his zeal in practice, for such instruments were rare enough at this time. Music was also bought in copious quantity, so that, although unregulated and wild, young Schumann's genius was abundantly fed. The accidental discovery of an orchestral score \* in his father's bookstore led Schumann, then eleven years old, to form a small orchestra from his youthful acquaintances. This crude organization consisted of two flutes, one clarinet, and two horns, while the piano filled up the remaining parts. It continued in existence for a long time. A year or two after its commencement, Schumann attempted to write a work for performance by this band.

The probable cause of the lack of thorough musical training during Schumann's youth lay in the fact that there was total variance of opinion between the parents

\* Righini's overture to *Tigranes*.

as to the career which he should pursue. The mother held music to be one of the breadless arts (although a good ornament to a finished education), and thought that the study of law should be her youngest son's aim; while the father, although sometimes feeling that the son could achieve greatness as a musician, had no very fixed conviction on the subject, and tacitly coincided in the view that the legal profession was the more practicable. The father died in 1826, and the youth of sixteen lost thus early the friend who could have understood his subsequent strivings best. Already, the sombre side of Schumann's nature had begun to develop. He was abstracted and taciturn, and only music could thoroughly arouse him. Two widely different authors were now his delight,—the sentimental German philosopher, Jean Paul (Richter), and Shakspeare, in a German translation. Jean Paul, exuberant in fancy, sentimental and extravagant in style, was exactly suited to the rather ill-balanced musical vein of Schumann in his younger days.

In March, 1828, at the age of eighteen, Schumann entered the Leipzig University, and began the study of law. Although he had been so enthusiastic a pianist, his general education had by no means been neglected; and he passed his examination with credit. A short journey to Munich, undertaken shortly after, led to an acquaintance with Heine, although neither of the young men then foresaw how their names should



be linked together in the future. They spent but a few hours together. Returned to Leipzig, the study of law was begun with an ardor which very soon cooled. Not only was Schumann by nature unfitted for so prosaic a study, but fate itself seemed to lead him away from it; for in Leipzig he met an old friend, Madame Carus, whose musical gifts always had fanned his love for the art, and here, too, he met Frederic Wieck, and his young daughter Clara who was to influence his entire future career. The loves of Héloïse and Abelard, of Laura and Petrarch, offer nothing more romantic, more self-sacrificing, than the loves of Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck; but as yet the influence exerted was purely an artistic one, for the latter was a mere child, yet already astonishing every one by her wonderful musical attainments. She was not what is generally termed "a prodigy": she was a well-equipped artist, although so young,—about nine years,—and compelled the respectful attention and admiration of all the leading critics. It may be briefly stated of Clara Wieck, afterward Madame Schumann, that her life has abundantly fulfilled the promise of her childhood. She has devoted her riper years to the task of compelling the world to recognize the merits of her husband. She has won renown as pianist, composer, and as the devoted wife and helpmate of Schumann. She is probably the greatest female musician the world has yet possessed, and lives to enjoy, in a

ripe old age, the honors she would so gladly have shared with her great husband.

Schumann took lessons in piano-playing from Frederic Wieck, but refused to take the harmonic and contrapuntal studies which that master sensibly combined with his teaching, as he held such studies to be absolutely unnecessary, believing that, if a musician had poetic ideas to express in tone, he would express them correctly by instinct. This was a fallacious opinion, which Schumann lived to regret bitterly. A short time afterward, through lack of time, Wieck was obliged to dismiss his pupil. Schumann thereafter went to Heidelberg to continue his legal studies, which were still tinged with music in a very unlawyer-like fashion. In Heidelberg, one of the faculty — Thibaut — chiefly attracted him; and this was because this professor was a refined musical enthusiast.

In 1830, after a pleasant journey to Italy and a return to his musical dreamings, the vacillation suddenly ceased. He found that he was making no progress in law, and not enough in music. "My whole life," he wrote to his mother, "has been but a twenty years' strife between poetry and prose, music and law; and this should come to an end now." It was a most pathetic letter, that of July 30, 1830, in which he implored his mother to make the fateful decision. Equally earnest and troubled was the letter of the mother to Frederic Wieck, leaving (at Schumann's

request) the verdict to his musical judgment. The mother deeply loved her youngest son; but she could not bring herself to look upon music as a profitable business, nor upon his talents as decided enough to make a mark in this field. After Wieck's decision had been made definitely in favor of music, the mother bravely acquiesced, and Schumann returned to Leipzig to study piano-playing only.

A well-known accident lost to the world a great pianist and gave to it a great composer. Not that the two functions are generally incompatible with each other,—Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Saint-Saëns, Rubinstein, and others, have united them,—but, had Schumann succeeded as a pianist, he would probably have held to his obstinate view, that harmony and counterpoint were useless studies, and his works would have been ill-balanced at the best. Therefore, the accident which lamed his right hand may be classed as a fortunate one. Finding much difficulty in attaining an equal touch with his right hand, he hit upon the device of fastening his third finger securely, and practising only with the other four fingers. Paralysis of the finger ensued, which soon extended to the entire hand; and his career as a pianist at once hopelessly ended. This was in the autumn of 1831. He felt that it was too late to return to the study of law, even had he desired it. Therefore, at last, he turned from his arbitrary course, and took up the study of composi-

tion in all its branches. Henry Dorn was his teacher, and his progress was amazingly rapid. Nevertheless, the influence of years of untrammelled practice was not entirely to be cast aside, and Schumann often lamented that his conceptions were chiefly "piano thoughts," — that is, the piano unconsciously remained foremost in his mind when composing.

In the autumn of 1833, the death of a sister-in-law evoked a reappearance of the deep melancholy which had followed his father's death, and which seemed to pass beyond the limits of mere grief into absolute hypochondria. This was, however, counteracted by a new duty which arose in Schumann's career. Criticism was bound in iron fetters in Germany in 1833. Beethoven, Mozart, and Weber were made such absolute landmarks by the reviewers that they could see no merit in any of the moderns who deviated from their paths; and they became obstacles rather than helps on the path of progress. Everything was stilted, rigid, unchangeable. Fortunately, at this period, Schumann met with Ludwig Schunke, and the two soon drew around them other young musicians with radical idéas. Knorr, Wieck, and Banck, and a host of recognized names, gave in their adhesion, and on the 3d of April, 1834, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* was issued, with which paper a new era of musical criticism began. Schumann, the critic, achieved as great reforms as Schumann, the composer; but we

shall consider these separately later on. Between the years 1836 and 1840, the master passion of Schumann's life, his love and struggle for Clara Wieck, exerted its influence on all his work. There were two or three lighter attachments, the result of a very impressible, romantic temperament, which preceded this love; but they were entirely obliterated by the fervor of this affection. It is unnecessary to dwell at length upon this well-known part of Schumann's life. The two hearts were responsive to each other from the first, although for years the father showed a vehement opposition to the marriage; judicial pressure at last was brought to bear to aid in forcing consent. It was the natural, true, and healthy love of two artist natures for each other: it is a pity that so much sentimentality should have been written about it. It is unquestionable, however, that the sharp alternations of hope and despair, which took place frequently during the four years preceding the marriage, seriously affected Schumann's mind, already prone to morbid influences. "Clara loves me as deeply as ever, yet I have forever resigned her," he despondingly writes to his sister-in-law, Theresa, in 1836 (November 15); yet the next year things looked better, and his hopes rose again. The father, however, insisted that the couple were not in a financial position to marry; and Schumann, who of all men knew the value of money least, and worked only for art and art's sake, was brought face to face

with a very prosaic problem, and manfully he set to work to solve it.

In 1838, he went to Vienna, hoping that the larger city would yield greater opportunities for his paper. In this respect, however, his visit was a failure, and he soon returned; but the trip was not without solid results, for during it he discovered a number of unpublished manuscripts by Schubert (of whose works he was an especial admirer), and had them printed at his own expense. Among the manuscripts was the great C major Symphony, which he at once sent to Mendelssohn, who had it performed at the Gewandhaus, Dec. 12, 1839. A pen which he found upon the grave of Beethoven was reverently used by him in writing the score of his own beautiful B-flat Symphony. On his return, he labored unremittingly to achieve the object of his life. He sought and attained a degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the university at Jena, hoping thereby to win the elder Wieck's consent to the marriage. It was all in vain; and, as he saw that he might wait hopelessly for a trace of yielding, the consent of the courts\* was obtained, and the wedding took place Sept. 12, 1840, in a village church at Schönefeld, near Leipzig. A period of tranquil happiness ensued, and at this time he burst forth in song. At one bound, he attained the highest position

\*A legal custom in Germany where parents oppose a reasonable marriage between persons who are not minors.

in German song composition. *Dichterliebe* ("Poet's Love"), picturing his own experiences, and *Frauenliebe* ("Woman's Love"), picturing those of his bride, are the two finest cycles of song in existence, a tribute which causes even the offering of sonnets which Petrarch gave to his Laura to seem slight by comparison.

After his marriage, his life became more calm and serene. His wife was of direct assistance to him in his labors, and all his work was done *con amore*; yet even at this time there were moments of abstraction, of isolation, which seemed a part of Schumann's very nature. At a later epoch, these grew apace. Not all the love of his wife and children, not all the triumphs which attended his career, could retard the steady approach of the insidious mental disease which finally caused his premature death. At times, he would sit absolutely silent, even in the midst of a conversational circle; and many a friendly visitor found himself obliged to be entirely silent, or to indulge in a monologue, when left alone with the eccentric composer, who would not unclothe his lips. He became one of the professors of the Leipzig Conservatory in 1843, but never was successful as a teacher. Sometimes, an entire lesson would pass away without Schumann having uttered a word of praise, blame, or criticism.

Subsequently, when he was appointed director at Düsseldorf, the same strange abstraction was apparen'.

From musicians who have played under him at this epoch, the author has learned something of the strange ways of the composer at the conductor's desk. Often, both at concert and rehearsal, he would forget to start the orchestra at all; and the men gradually came to look to the first violinist (the *Concertmeister*) for the initial beat. When this was once given, and the orchestra began to play, Schumann would start, as from a reverie, and begin beating the time; but all the quick movements were taken too slow, for his mind had (in 1850) already lost the faculty of thinking quickly. He stood before the orchestra, scarcely looking at it, with his lips pursed up as if he were whistling to himself. If, at rehearsals, things went badly, as under such circumstances they often would, he would repeat the work over and over, but without criticism or comment, and would get angry with the musicians, as if they played badly out of personal spite against him. A concert tour through Russia (in 1844) had been one succession of triumphs, and in 1853 he again had the happiness of finding his works recognized in the Netherlands; whither he made a tour with his wife, whose playing made his piano compositions better understood than they otherwise could have been. This was the last gleam of sunshine; for, after the journey, the disease grew upon him rapidly.\* Feb. 27,

\*For details of his last days, see Elson's *Last Hours of Great Composers*.



1854, he attempted suicide; and, although rescued, the shock caused his nerves to give way entirely. The remainder of his life was passed in a private asylum. July 29, 1856, he expired in the arms of his faithful wife. He left also three daughters and four sons to mourn his loss. He was buried at Bonn July 31. Schumann's influence, both as critic and composer, was great during his lifetime, but much greater after his death. How far-reaching this influence was will be considered in the next chapter.

## XXI.

### SCHUMANN AS COMPOSER AND CRITIC.

SCHUMANN was so many-sided, and worked with so much success in so many different directions that it is difficult to sum up his influence on the music of the present without pursuing many different lines of analysis. As this work deals with German vocal music only, we need not, however, go very deeply into details regarding his piano compositions; yet it may be tersely stated that his influence upon piano playing and composition was great and lasting, and that he was the head and front of the romantic school of instrumentalists. More than any composer, he wrote himself into his piano works, and many of them are merely reflections of events in his own life. Thus, the *Carnival* becomes a record of his interest in the young Clara Wieck and his affection for Ernestine von Fricken, who was born in the town of Asch, and the juggling which the composer did with the letters spelling the name of this town\* is an ingenious

\*In the German nomenclature, As is A-flat, Es is E-flat, and H is B. In the "Sphinxes," Schumann does most of this spelling work, giving the name with the letters "A, Es, C, H," then "As, C, H." His genius was able to surmount the obstacles of such work, and redeem it from

tribute and homage to her, just as the previous theme and variations on the name "Abegg" show a preceding affection for a young lady, whose name is thinly disguised under the title of "Countess" d'Abegg. His literary works are also inextricably interwoven with his piano compositions.

Schumann, more than any other writer, appreciated the fact that criticism could be made from different stand-points, and the same composition would receive different treatment according to difference in the natures of the critics. He therefore wrote his reviews of music as coming from different imaginary personalities. "Eusebius" represented the dreamy, mystical nature, which would be moved by the spirit of a work rather than by its grammar, and would seek beauties rather than defects. "Florestan," on the contrary, represented the ardent radical, who would seize upon defects with an eagle eye, and was impetuous and exacting. A third imaginary character was "Master Raro," who tried to reconcile these extremes. The characters of "Eusebius" and "Florestan" extended even into Schumann's music, and their opposing qualities appear in many of his piano works. In order to

being merely ingenious trifling. The amount of tone picturing which Schumann indulged in may be judged from the *Carnival*, where the clumsy steps of the clown (in "Pierrot"), the graceful skips of Harlequin, the daintiness of Columbine, the comicality of Pantaloon, the sweetness of Clara's character ("Chiarina"), the dreaminess and impetuosity of his own ("Eusebius" and "Florestan"), and his fight against the Philistines, are all pictured in succession.

understand Schumann's greatness in the field of criticism, it is necessary to sum up the difficulties which he had to contend against. In 1834 there was a battle of progress going on. The newer composers were beginning to work outside the limits of the classical and sonata-form, while the hide-bound critics of the time would have none of it. They looked at the shape and grammar of a work, regardless of its poetic contents. Méry\* has sarcastically spoken of this order of criticism, which accepts only what is established, as follows: "They cry: 'O sublime Mozart! What a *finale*! What a duet in the first act! And what basses! O Mozart!' But these same persons, who have such colics of admiration when they hear the name of Mozart, lived under other names when *Don Giovanni* was written; and then they cried: 'O Gluck! Divine Gluck! He would never have written such a thing as the Leporello aria! O majestic Gluck! O *Armide*! *Orpheus*!' etc. . . . And the same people, under again different names, said, when *Orpheus* first appeared: 'O Lulli! godlike Lulli! What touching simplicity! That is music! That is not a shrieking and howling, as in Gluck's *Orpheus*! One hears the singer, and not the orchestra. And why not? Music must be felt, smelt like an invisible flower. Godlike Lulli! O *Triumph of Flora*! What an opera that is! How far above Gluck and his howling *Armida*! "Come,

\* Quoted by Liszt in his essay on "Berlioz and the Harold Symphony."

zephyr, sweetest zephyr, Flora calls thee!" Did Gluck ever write a melody like that? No! Music will never again reach to such a height!"

Such critics imagine that they are leading public taste, while they are in reality only following it, at a respectful distance. They bring up the rear in the procession of progress. Such were the conservative reviewers in Leipzig who sought to stifle the new school of romantic composition, who measured everything with the yard-stick of formalism, who caused even Beethoven and Mozart to become obstructions in the path of musical progress. Against these, Schumann manfully began a reaction. Full of poetry and enthusiasm, he gathered around him a circle of admiring assistants, not less zealous than himself; and the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* became the rallying point of the radicals in music, with Schumann leading the van in the onslaught upon the Philistines.\* This in itself would have been service enough for art, but Schumann was in addition the most generous and unselfish of critics. He was never so happy as when discovering some new genius, some rising star in the musical firmament. He was the first to discover, justly appreciate, and assist such composers as Gade, Brahms, Franz, and even Berlioz. He and his staff of contributors were called young "fancy-mongers," culti-

\* This war is also represented in his piano music, his own band of followers being idealized under the title of the "Davids Bändler."

vating only the poetical side of music, to the detriment of the technical; but he gladly assumed the character thus thrust upon him, and upheld poetic judgment of poetic productions. As a teacher in the Leipzig Conservatory, his influence was not very great. He was too abstracted to be able to impart much of his musical knowledge, and his pupils made but little progress. In the same manner and from the same causes, his career as orchestral conductor cannot be called a great success. But it is as a vocal composer that Schumann attained his perfection. Great as his piano works are, powerful as some of his symphonic movements may be ranked, they are not so entirely powerful as his songs. We have already alluded to the cause which led to the production of his two greatest cycles of song, "Poet's Love" and "Woman's Love,"—the winning of the hand of Clara Wieck after an intense struggle. That all of Schumann's songs are singable cannot be asserted. Judged by the vocal teacher's standard, they do not flow from the larynx as easily as the mellifluous measures of the Italian school; but, musically, they are the master-works of the *Lied* form. The technical fault of the vocal treatment is that the compass of the voice is not carefully regarded. Schumann could not pause in mid career to think if a note suited or did not suit the singer: the musical picture was the thought pre-eminent in his mind, and to this all other points must needs yield. Therefore, we find the part of Mar-

guerite in his *Faust* continuing for a long while in the deep register of a mezzo-soprano, and then leaping up to the passages whose *tessitura* would try even a high soprano; and in "A Sunday on the Rhine" we find the voice also used first in one extreme and then in the other. *Faust* may be classed as Schumann's greatest vocal work; and, of all the many different settings of Goethe's poem, this one best reflects the philosophical, ethical tendencies of the poet. Yet *Manfred* is a more successful work, as a whole; for *Manfred* is a more romantic *Faust*, and suited Schumann's vein of thought perfectly. Its one blemish is the introduction of a requiem at its close, a number which certainly adds to the musical contrast, but is as much out of place in the Byronic idea as a set of dancing dervishes would be at a pope's funeral. Byron's text has been somewhat mangled also in the attempt to make it suit the needs of a cantata. In all of Schumann's songs, spite of inequality, of unvocal treatment, or of spasmodic character, the subjective style of the music, the keenness of perception, and the romantic intellectuality lead one to reiterate Liszt's verdict,—"*Schumann is the best music thinker since Beethoven.*" In Schumann's songs, we find very little of the definite object-painting which one encounters in Schubert's vocal works. A picture of emotion, not of objects, was the desideratum in his *Lieder*. The strophe form, so constantly met with in the songs of Schubert and Franz,

was but little used by Schumann. *Durchcomponirung*, or the setting of different music to each verse according to its emotions, was for him the only true method. In the ballad form, however, where a definite story is told, the composer heightened the effect by a certain amount of tone painting. In the "Two Grenadiers," for example, where Heine has pictured the frenzied anguish of two old soldiers returning from a Russian captivity, on learning of the capture of their idolized Napoleon, the hobble of the two wounded men, the increasing agitation culminating in the "Marseillaise," and the final reaction when the abnormal excitement has passed away and the heroes find themselves merely two helpless old men (pictured by a few gloomy chords at the end) are realistic touches which heighten the effect of the poem, just as Goethe's "Erl-king" was intensified by Schubert.

Schumann's accompaniments repay the closest study; for often some delicate touch is introduced which is full of meaning, yet may escape instant recognition. The accompaniment to "A Youth he loved a Maiden" seems meaningless, until one has understood the sarcastic tone of the poem. It is a bit of musical irony. The jingly accompaniment to "The Rose, the Lily, the Sun, and the Dove," shows how Schumann caught the exhilaration of the poet. "Woman's Love" is full of these subtle touches of musical meaning. When, for example, the husband is dead, and the



widow bewails her unutterable loss, the composer by introducing the theme of the first song (picturing the awakening of love) indicates that she may find consolation in the memory of him who is gone,—a point suggested by the poem, and thoroughly in keeping with it. Most wonderful of all, in connection with the songs, was the great versatility displayed. Every note in the gamut of feeling is sounded, and each with a master hand. "Ich grolle nicht" is a picture of triumphant scorn, such as Tennyson has massed in the single line,—

"Perish in thy self-contempt!"

and is the most dramatic song of its length in existence. The fairy enchantment of "Aus Alten Mährchen" is as far removed from this as possible, yet equally effective. He has achieved the simplicity of the folk-song — most difficult to acquire — in "The Green Hat," and the dignity of the historic ballad in "Blondel's Song." Two most wonderful bits of nature are "Spring Night" and "Moonlight," both of which are entirely subjective in their character,—records of emotion rather than of scenery.

Among all his contrasts of light-heartedness and earnestness, none is more charming than his "Sunday on the Rhine." Schumann dearly loved the Rhine life, and pictured it often in his works, notably in his "Cologne" Symphony; and in this song he presents first the pleasant delight of a Rhine voyage, and then,

suddenly adopting an earnest tone, he portrays the greatness of the German nation, which is represented in it. It is impossible to speak of even the foremost among Schumann's songs in a work devoted to general history. But the facts may be dwelt upon that Schumann's songs have always something to say, and say it well; that his accompaniments are the most masterly ever given to the German *Lied*; and that in Heine he found his true literary prototype. Heine was the foe of formality in poetry as Schumann was in music. Heine was terse, condensed, and epigrammatic in words as Schumann was in tones. Strong contrasts were the delight of both. Heine delighted in discovering new forms of expression, and enjoyed shocking the formalists and critics by using them; and Schumann certainly followed the same course in his field. It is therefore not to be wondered at that the combination of the art of both should have produced the ideal German song, the very acme of the *Lied*, and a model which may serve for coming generations of composers showing what power may be condensed into this shape in the hands of masters, and how much may be said in even a few bars of music.

## XXII.

### ROBERT FRANZ.

THE Greek saying, "Count no man happy until he is dead," may readily be altered in the case of composers into, "Count no musician thoroughly famous while he is alive." Brahms in the orchestral field and Robert Franz in the domain of German song must wait for posterity to do full justice to their wonderful genius. It is not surprising that so quiet, modest, and retiring a nature as that of Robert Franz should remain unrecognized, even by those who were thrown in close contact with it, and who knew of the earnest study, the fidelity to art, the lofty ideas which inspired its workings. The life of Franz has not been, on the one hand, so full of misery and struggle as that of Schubert, nor, on the other, so strange and romantic as that of Schumann; but one will find it to be filled with a sterling heroism, which was not less valuable than the more attractive deeds of the former masters, even though it be more prosaic.

Robert Franz -- for, by a pleasant coincidence, the great song-writer of the present bears the first names of the two great song-writers of the past (Schumann

and Schubert) as his own — was born in Halle, June 28, 1815, and was the son of a good solid citizen of that city, who believed in music only as an embellishment of a good education or as a means of religious worship, he belonging to that order of pietists who made Halle a centre such as Edinburgh was to the old Scotch Covenanters. The young Franz, then, had plenty of music in the family circle; but it was almost all of the psalm-singing variety, and was not always of the highest order. Nevertheless, it exerted a beneficial influence over the young musician, for it caused him, even from the beginning, to love the sacred school of music, the influence of which is perceptible in many of his works. The young musician seems to have had an intense love of music even from the very beginning, for he himself chronicles the recollection of "A Strong Castle is our Lord," which he heard given at a religious celebration, when but a little over two years of age. His greatest delight, as a child, was to sit near his father, as the latter led the family worship in the evening, and listen to the sacred songs which he sang; and, when one was completed, the young Robert would generally beg for one or two more, — a request which was generally granted, for the elder Franz loved religious music heartily, and was able to execute both its vocal and instrumental requirements, although not a musician, and, as already intimated, not understanding the full scope of music by any means. Never-

theless, the grand old chorales, which must have been given frequently in such a pious Protestant family, were good food for the young prince of song.

In school, during his early days, his love of music was shown in a rather quaint manner. The children were obliged, as part of their studies, to sing certain simple melodies, which the plodding schoolmaster directed. The young musician, prompted by a love of harmonic combination, generally improvised an alto part to these tunes, and sang it. But the teacher had no comprehension of the refined musical thought which this betokened, and finally threatened a severe flogging unless the pupil would promise immediate reformation, and stick to the tune in the future. It may be mentioned, in this connection, that the harmonic mind which this incident betokened is much rarer than is generally supposed. Among the thousands who glibly say, "I love music," the great mass merely enjoy rhythmic melody, which is a natural taste with all mankind, but a few may be found whose love of music runs deeper, and means a fondness for combinations, modulations, and other intricacies, as well as an enjoyment of tune. Such a nature was Robert Franz.

When he reached the age of fourteen, the longing for a systematic course of musical study became too strong to be resisted, and he pleaded with his parents that he might be allowed to study the art. There was intense opposition at first, for the father held that, if

he knew enough of music to sing and play a chorale, all the real purposes of music were accomplished,—for the rest, it was a breadless art, and rather to be avoided than cherished. When at last the parents' consent was gained, it was but a compromising, half-hearted one; and a cheap and rather incompetent teacher was employed, the father not believing that his son would persist in delving deeply into the art.

It was impossible, however, to dam up the stream which was to flow from the musical genius of Franz. Obstacles but made him more determined, more quietly persistent, and he sought the acquaintance of several of the local musicians, particularly of the organists, who often allowed him to practise a little on their instruments. This fed his love of the sacred forms, and the chorale became his chief admiration. On Sundays he would rush from church to church, hoping to find some of his organist friends ready for a temporary and unpaid substitute, and he was often rewarded for his efforts by finding a chance to play a chorale or two for congregational singing during service.

Thus passed the years, uneventfully, yet not unfruitfully, until the boy had grown to young manhood. There was nothing to attract the attention of the world or of the historian. There was no *Sturm und Drang*, as with Schumann; no bitter poverty and life-struggle, as with Schubert. It seemed a plodding nature, working consistently on its own slow path. But hidden

under the placid surface was the tremendous force of a mind thoroughly made up, and the lava stream of burning genius and aspiration, and at last the stream began to widen and flow more rapidly.

At twenty years of age, Franz left his native Halle for Dessau, where he became a pupil of Friedrich Schneider, whose influence upon him was most beneficial. While pursuing his studies in Dessau, he met a former schoolmate, named Reupsch, a famous improviser on the organ and a great lover of the chorale. Naturally, this led to a renewed friendship, by which Franz's already great love of the chorale grew apace. Reupsch was a genius, but a very one-sided one. His passion was entirely for organ, and all his wonderful improvisations were given upon chorale themes. In the development of these, however, he must have been marvellously gifted, for Franz himself, in later years, told his great pupil, August Saran, that he had never heard anything so wonderful in his life as the music which Reupsch used to improvise during the hours they passed together in Dessau. Reupsch's influence was not altogether bad for our young musician, since he, in trying to imitate this erratic meteor, attained a good mastery of free counterpoint in improvisation, while his teacher Schneider brought order into the chaos which might otherwise have ensued, and Franz thus became an excellent organist.

But the studies at Dessau at last came to an end, and Franz returned to a prosaic life in Halle. Now ensued six years of patient waiting, of unrecognized heroism. His return took place in 1837; and for six years his art seemed to have been studied in vain, so far as any tangible return was concerned. Neither fame nor money came to the quiet young organist, whose modest ways seemed quite unsuited to carve out a career in this working world. He was his own severest critic, destroying many of his own compositions, because they did not satisfy him, and keeping others locked up in his desk, without an idea as to their ultimate use. His friends were bitterly disappointed that the musical study should have borne so little fruit. His relatives longed for him to take up a more remunerative career, but all in vain, for he held to his determination to be a musician with a steadiness that was one of the finest traits in his character. His mother intuitively perceived that this trait would yet lead to success, and through all the six years of doubt and apparent failure remained his steadfast friend and upholder. Meanwhile, no musical employment came, and Franz refused any other. He gradually drew around him a circle of kindred spirits, musicians who enjoyed the antique school of compositions, and a little club was formed, which had a decided influence on his study. Franz is to-day the greatest musical antiquarian (Father Gevaert deserves honorable mention



in this field also), and more than any one else, appreciates the spirit of the ancient composers,—a fact which has led to his giving the world the best revisions of the old masters in music, and saving to us many of the best works of Bach in a practical shape. But it was not Bach and the antique school only which he studied, the romantic works of Schubert were also his great delight, and the combination of these tastes can be readily detected in his vocal compositions, where the melodic grace of the new school is engrafted upon the strict form of the old.

In 1843, the six years of plodding, patient waiting came to an end; he published a set of twelve songs, which at once aroused the attention of all Germany. Never had such an opus 1 burst forth upon the world, so unheralded, from such an unknown source. In this set are contained such glorious numbers as "The Lotos Flower," "Oh, wert thou in the Cauld Blast," "Go fetch a Flask of Sparkling Wine," "Sunday," and the charming "Slumber Song." Schumann at once, in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, called the attention of the world to the fact that a new star had arisen in the vocal field of composition. His enthusiasm was soon shared by Liszt, Mendelssohn, Gade, and others, and a fairly remunerative position as director in Halle was the immediate consequence. His position, although by no means a brilliant one, was quite to his liking, since it gave him an opportunity to delve still

more constantly among the scores of the old masters, an employment for which, as we shall see later, the world has cause to be very grateful to him.

A post as organist was soon after added to his employment as director, and this kept alive the practice of the old chorale music: therefore, although not famous even in his own little city, his lot would have been a contented one, had not a growing deafness set in almost at the very commencement of his labors. It is said that the primary cause of this was his being stunned by the shriek of a locomotive close beside him, which gave him both a nervous and physical shock. The disease progressed in a peculiar manner, the higher notes vanishing one by one, at intervals, from his perception. Another whistle of an engine, accidentally heard, materially hastened matters, and caused him in 1868 to give up his positions because of his shattered nerves. In 1861, the University of Halle had conferred upon him the title of "Doctor," in recognition of a series of musical lectures delivered to the students. His fame was gradually extending; and when the loss of his income, through his aural and nervous maladies, threatened poverty, there were eminent workers and famous friends ready to drive the wolf from his door. Franz Liszt led the van in instituting concerts all the world over, to help this suffering master. America even responded to the cry for aid that went forth; and the result of it all was that a

munificent sum was raised, sufficient not only to help immediate needs, but to place the great musician in comfort for the rest of his days. Like Schumann, Franz married a musician; the songs of his wife, published some years ago under her maiden name of Maria Hinrichs, are worthy of the attention of all musicians.

Franz's later days are passed in quiet and tranquillity in Halle. He has never travelled much, and one may search through the entire lists of musical biography to find a life as placid and as uneventful as this one has been. Nevertheless, as we have seen, it has not been free from the troubles which seem to make the glory of genius; and it has been in some respects a model of modesty, of quiet resolution, of painstaking, and of self-abnegation. In these days, when form in music is being rashly set aside as a useless encumbrance when every amateur believes that he cannot express emotion without overthrowing the entire architecture of music, such a life teaches a double lesson; and Franz's life and works may stand as a barrier against the inundation of the "sea of tone" which the neophytes (following the example of Wagner) propose to "swim in."

## XXIII.

### THE SONGS OF ROBERT FRANZ.

OUT of the German folksong, came the German Chorale, and from them both Franz drew the inspiration which has made his lieder the best productions of their school in the present generation. Often his songs approach very closely to the simplicity and naïvete of the music of the people, but there is always some touch of counterpoint which makes them rank among classical works. The habit of introducing such contrapuntal passages even in moments of the utmost passion or tenderness, have led his critics to rebuke him for having "too much learning" and endeavoring to display it. The same charges were made against Beethoven in his life time. It is only today that we understand that the so-called learned passages in the great Sonatas were but the natural expression of some especial thought which could not be given in any other form. The accusation made against Franz, that his works smell of the midnight oil, is as false as the older one against Beethoven. His songs are the legitimate outcome of the contrapuntal mind and it would be unjust to demand of such a sedentary nature,

the same style of expression as that of the melodious and erratic Schubert.

His work in the restoration of ancient musical masterpieces alone, should entitle him to the lasting gratitude of the world, for there is no field of labor which requires such self-abnegation as this retouching of the works of others. It is entirely altruistic. The great oratorios and cantatas of Bach and Handel were left by those composers in a skeleton state; in their time it was expected that the composer would always be present at the performance of his work, or at least confer with those who were to produce it, and therefor the score was often left merely a rough draft of vocal parts with the contrabass or cello part under them, while a few guiding passages were "cued in", and were sufficient to recall to the memory of the composer-director the movement of the interior parts. Add to this the fact that some of the instruments used have become obsolete, that the discant-trumpet has been greatly altered, that the oboes and bassoons were unnecessarily prominent, and that the king of the wood wind—the clarinette—had not been perfected and was not then admitted into the orchestra, and it will be seen why it has been necessary to fit the ancient masterpieces for performance in our time by arranging additional accompaniments to them. In such accompaniments the modern composer must attain the *juste milieu*; he must not obscure the original thought; he must sink his own individuality; he must *think* with the ancient composer. Mendelssohn

attempted such work, and failed, and even Mozart was but a half-success at it, his changes being at times, too bold and original, beautiful as they were. It was Franz, the modest unassuming musical antiquary, who with a reverent yet firm hand, gave the true touches of color to Handel and Bach, which brought back the real spirit of the old tone paintings. He has only added what the old composers themselves would have done had they possessed the resources of the modern orchestra. There was but little pecuniary reward; there was but little acknowledgement on the part of the public; it was the very ideal of Art for Art's sake. Posterity will recognize the gift, and rebuke the critics who demanded that Franz should do the task by merely adding a few chords to the ancient polyphony, a proceeding that would have resulted as badly as an attempt to mix oil with running water.

But Franz's title to fame is a double one. His *lieder* are as original and often as beautiful as those of Schumann or Schubert, and have shown to the world how well passion and romantic feeling can be expressed within the limits of strictest form. He has often used the strophe form of Schubert, but with a richer and deeper meaning. He is subjective rather than objective in his treatment. His accompaniments are generally more elaborate than those of Schubert, for he was strong just where the latter was weak,—in counterpoint. When using the strophe form, after repeating the accompaniment for two or three

verses, he usually adds a little florid counterpoint to the last, as a climax; making a more effective end. In the beautiful "Slumber Song", "The Thornbush", and "There Sounds in the Air", these dainty final touches may readily be seen.

Many of his lieder are formed, as already intimated, upon very simple melodies. The sequence form (the simplest in music) is frequently and effectively employed by him. "Meerfahrt" ("On the Sea") is a masterpiece of this form. One of his songs, and a work of considerable length when one considers the materials,—"*Ya du bist elend*", ("*Yea, thou art wretched*")—is made up of a single figure, continually rising, step by step, in more and more intense denunciation. The subject bears a close resemblance to Schumann's "*Ich Grolle nicht*", already spoken of. Both composers well understood the increase of dramatic power and vehemence which could be represented by the constant reiteration of a figure on ascending degrees. In "*Er ist Gekommen*" ("*He has come*") rising sequences are used in a less tragic manner here expressing joy and rapture.

Not all of Franz's songs are in the strophe form; many are *durchcomponirt*, the music going on in dramatic style without repetitions. Not all possess the contrapuntal accompaniment either. "*Out of the depths of Sorrow*" may, for example, stand as a beautiful example of what a simple chord accompaniment should be.

The songs in which Franz has allowed his contrapun-

tal genius full scope are the most effective, and at once suggest other instruments than the piano in the accompaniment. The added parts by no means take away from the pathos or beauty of the melodies. If our readers will but examine "Mother oh sing me to rest" or "When that sweet song is ringing" they will find the greatest depth of emotion combined with the most contrapuntal accompaniment.

Franz sounded every note in the scale of human feeling as Schubert and Schumann had done. It is almost impossible to describe the versatility which can be found in his vocal works, yet we feel tempted to classify at least a few of the emotions depicted, each song being among the best models of its class for young composers to study and imitate.

Daintiness—"Liebchen ist da" "My love is here."

Evening Tranquility—"Abends" "Gently roves the Evening breeze."

Religion—Ave Maria (a tone picture of religious exaltation.)

Impatient Joy—"Er ist Gekommen" "He has come."

Folksongs—"The Thornbush", "My mother loves me not," "Rosemary".

War—"Go fetch a flask of sparkling wine."

Exalted Affection—"Dedication," "Marie."

The Forest—"Willkommen mein Wald," "Welcome fair wood."



Deep Melancholy—"In Autumn," "The Rider in the Valley."

Calm Sea—"Meerfahrt," "On the Sea."

Angry Sea—"Mit Schwarzen Segeln," "With blackened sails."

Denunciation—"Ya du bist elend," "Yes thou art wretched".

Dreamy Tenderness—"The Lotus flower."

Drowsiness—"Slumber song."

Pathos—"Mother oh sing me to rest."

Spring—"Mai Lied", "May song."

But the list would be endless. It must be borne in mind that the above are by no means all the songs upon these subjects, nor are the emotions cited the only ones in the songs named. In such songs as "An die Bretterne Schiffswand" or "Es träumte mir von einer weiten Haide," the most intense longing is combined with ineffable tenderness. Contrasts are frequent and always artistically made, as at the end of "In Rhein, im heiligen Strome." As was the case with Schumann, many of Franz's most beautiful songs were inspired by the poetry of Heine.

It is pleasant to remember that the great triumvirate of German song writers, all owe something of their power to the greatest German lyrical poet. The poet has passed away, the wonderful composers save their last, physically feeble, brother, have followed; and the German song has entered upon an epoch of deterioration and decay, during which we can only hope for a *renaissance* when a new

German poet shall arise, to lead again, a new race of German composers.

In the Scotch songs which Franz attempted, he scarcely succeeded better than Schumann, but he did not always attempt a literal reproduction of the Scotch style, and, in so far, is less disappointing. His "Go fetch a flask of sparkling wine," makes no attempt at local Gaelic color, but is a grand picture of love and war.

Franz's latest songs have a sombre tint, telling too plainly of life's autumn; but even these still show the master of form, the poetic composer. In fact, in speaking of the songs of Franz, the historian cannot fail to do injustice to some, by mentioning any; for it is not as with Schubert's or Schumann's works, where one can boldly affirm certain songs to be powerful, and others comparatively weak; Franz's lamp has shone with a steady light, and from opus 1, to the most recent songs of the master it is difficult to find a passage, far less a composition, which one would wish omitted from the list. It is indeed a pity that so skilled and poetic a composer, should not have undertaken the larger form of musical work. He only, of all the composers of the present, could have added another to the short list of oratorios; his knowledge, taste, and deep religious feeling, all combined to make him the upholder of a school of composition which seems to have passed away with the polyphonic epoch, never to come back again.

Art and nature united in Robert Franz in a wonderful

manner. He will long stand as a sea wall against the tide of young composers who believe that the bursts of passion which all concede to be necessary to great music, cannot be given without violating form.

Not yet can full justice be done to the work and influence of this quiet and resolute genius, for it seems to be a fundamental law of Musical history that no great worker in this art shall be fully comprehended until his epitaph is written. Nevertheless, as some of his services have been so palpable, and as his musical knowledge has come to be so well conceded, let us hope that an earlier recognition may be given to Robert Franz.

## XXIV.

### MENDELSSOHN AND OTHER SONG COMPOSERS.

AFTER the three great composers whose lives and works we have just examined, there comes a large list of names of composers who have varied the character of the German *Lied*, and have largely increased the repertoire, yet without exerting so vast an influence upon songs, that we need examine very minutely into their works. Mendelssohn's greatest claims upon our admiration lie apart from his *lieder*. Most cultured of men and most carefully educated of musicians, his life was too smooth and tranquil, his character too elegant, to admit him to the ranks of the great reformers in music. His greatest vocal works are his oratorios, and these may be said to be the only ones of modern times which may be classed as at all approaching the power of the masterpieces of Handel, Bach, or Haydn. More dramatic perhaps, than such works should legitimately be, they will yet continue as active influences in the sacred school because of their melodious beauty, their excellent counterpoint, and their evident sincerity. Judged by the strict standard

of the oratorio school, "St. Paul" is a greater work than "Elijah," yet the latter, glowing with emotion and color, full of strong contrast and startling effect, and above all remarkably tuneful, will probably ever remain the more popular work of the two.

In opera Mendelssohn made but one complete essay, and that a complete failure; yet "Camacho's Wedding" is not a sure indication of what Mendelssohn might have done in this field, for it is the work of a mere youth, and is weighed down by the most stupid of librettos. The unfinished "Loreley" shows vastly more virility and effect. But in the compositions which lie most directly in the line of this history—the *lieder*—Mendelssohn showed himself to be an elegant, symmetrical and popular musician. He had by no means the depth of Schumann, the poetry of Schubert, or the subtlety of Franz, but in a certain way he prepared the public taste to appreciate these three. Symmetry there is in his songs, as in those of Franz, but with Mendelssohn this becomes an end, rather than a means. He seems to have avoided the poems of Heine, as too vehement for his gentle muse, or possibly because he did not wish to be too closely compared with the giants who had set them, and were setting them to music. His song subjects seem to have been chosen in such a manner that the music should generally be more important than the words. He is in the German Song, what Thomas Moore is in poetry; always graceful, delicate, even delightful, but never grand or soulstirring.

Yet we cannot agree with the ultra-moderns who look down upon Mendelssohn's *lieder* with a pitying sufferance. In these days when it has come to be the fashion to discard form, to develop the accompaniment until the voice becomes merely a slight adjunct to the song, it is healthful as well as pleasant to turn to Mendelssohn's suave measures. His *lieder* only become disappointing when brought in direct contrast with the great works spoken of in the preceding chapters, but there is in them a degree of equal excellence, and of refinement that ought not to be obliterated by the greater works. It would be a harsh critic who would deny Moore's right to fame simply because Milton or Shakespeare had existed, and the greatness of Schumann's two "*Grenadiers*," and "*Ich Grolle Nicht*," or of Schubert's "*Aufenthalt*" and "*Der Wanderer*" should not make us turn from the daintiness of Mendelssohn's "*I hear a wee bird calling*," the plaintive melancholy of "*By Celia's Arbor*" or the sweet melodic languor of "*On song's bright pinions*." The most marked influence of Mendelssohn's songs was exerted in England, and it would be folly to assert that this influence was not a good one, since, although they for a time, kept out the works of Schumann, when the latter compositions did come in, the British taste was riper to receive them.

Of the numerous modern German composers of eminent rank it will be unnecessary to speak at great length, since their fame is not fully established in song-compo-

sition, and at least their lieder are not sufficiently important to create an epoch, or to make musical history. Brahms in his songs has shown that he possesses that gift of melody which the critics of his symphonies are often disposed to deny him. His "Deutsches Requiem" and his "Schicksal's Lied" are among the grandest modern additions to the large vocal forms with chorus. His songs are often beautiful, and always display originality. They vary from simplicity, as in his "Cradle Song," to highly developed musical thoughts as in "Wie bist du meine Königin," yet they attract rather by the evident mastery of harmony which the composer possesses, than by great emotional power. It may be safe to predict that they will not rank with the very greatest of German songs. It would however be a great injustice to judge of Brahms by his songs alone. The moment the orchestra comes upon the scene, whether with chorus or alone, the thoughts of the master have freer scope, and he remains the only great standard bearer of the form which Beethoven so grandly established—the symphony.

Rubinstein, although not a German has added much that is worthy to the repertoire of German song. He has more than almost any other living composer, the gift of originality in melody, and has given a quaint flavor to many of his vocal works by choosing the poems of the German orientalist Bodenstedt ("Mirza-Schaffy,") for musical illustration, and giving them the true Eastern style, an effect at which even Beethoven and Mozart labored in

vain. Beethoven's "Turkish March" and Mozart's "Alla Turca" are not really Oriental, while Rubinstein's "Asra," and "Gold rolls here beneath me" have the real Eastern wailing, and *coloratur*. Therefore he may be credited with giving entirely new touches to German song, although these effects can by no means be called Teutonic.

Jensen deserves honorable mention in the list of German song composers. Spite of the fact that he wrote much for the piano, his talent lay entirely in the direction of song, for even his instrumental works have a singable melody attached. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Schumann, and his songs bear traces that his admiration took the form of unconscious imitation. His accompaniments are open to the charge of being too difficult, and some satirists have accused them of being "piano solos with vocal accompaniment." The sarcasm is unjust, for the lyrical element is ever pre-dominant in them. Examine for example the tenderly melodious—"Murmuring breeze whose perfumed breath" (whose opening phrase, by an odd coincidence, is the same as that of Bach's "My heart ever faithful") and one will readily see that the work, spite of a difficult accompaniment, is the ideal of lyric melody. The intricate accompaniment to "By the Manzanares" is but a fitting guitar background to a truly Spanish song. The piano part of "Margreth am Thore" is far too developed for the subject, yet the melody is rollicking and lighthearted just as such a song



should be. Jensen's songs are even beyond those of Mendelssohn in beauty of tune, while this very developed style, is a failing which leans to virtue's side, since it makes the work interesting to the musician as well as to the amateur. Occasionally however, the fault of cloying sweetness, of excess of tenderness can be found. In such songs as "Oh let me hold thee, golden moment," or "Press now thy cheek, against mine own" this defect is self-evident. Yet we believe that Jensen's songs will take higher rank than has hitherto been accorded them; possibly a position between Mendelssohn's lieder and those of Schumann. Jensen died in 1879.

We have already spoken of the power and excellence of the true German *Ballade*. It remains yet to speak of one composer who more than any other, brought this form into Teutonic music; a composer whose works have been far too little known among English-speaking nations, and whose style is spoken of in Groves' "Dictionary of music and musicians" as "gone by forever." Carl Loewe or (Johann Carl Gottfried Loewe as his full name runs) was born near Halle in 1796, and lived a pleasant life chiefly as professor in Stettin. Fond of travel, and famous enough to gratify his taste he visited most European countries, and was well received in all. His personal career was uneventful save for the long trances which attacked him in his later years and which finally ended his life in 1869. His heart was buried at his request, by his beloved organ in the church of St.

Jacobus in Stettin. Loewe was one of the most prolific of composers, and boldly attempted all fields of musical creation, but it was only in the domain of song that he achieved success enough to leave an impression on his time and our own.

Melody and poetic thought were possessed by Loewe in a high degree, and he had the true dramatic instinct in all of his songs. This led him to give to the story in song (or *ballade*) a meaning and graphically which it lacked under all other composers save Schumann, and occasionally Schubert. Naturally his songs are generally *durchcomponirt*, for his first object was to make the music fittingly portray the ever changing sense of the words. In ecstatic beauty of expression his works are at times, unrivalled. "Die Abgeschiedenen" may be named as an example of blissful melody of which any composer would be proud. His setting of Byron's "Hebrew Melodies" is the only really worthy musical treatment these beautiful poems have ever received. But when a dramatic picture was to be portrayed, when poet and musician were to give a thrilling narrative together, then Loewe became, the really great master. Then the accompaniment became full of meaning and the melody full of subtle touches. His "Erlking" overshadowed by the great work of Schubert, is yet worthy to take a place beside the more celebrated composition. His "Archibald Douglass" is a wonderfully attractive tale from Scotch History. His "Sir Oluf" is a whole fairy-

story told in tones. In order that our readers may understand what a true ballad should be, we may briefly analyze the effects of this song.

"Sir Oluf through the night doth ride  
He goes to meet a lovely bride."

Here the accompaniment pictures the gallop of the steed.

"The elves were dancing upon the strand  
The elfking's daughter gives him her hand,  
Now welcome Sir Oluf come dance thou with me  
Two golden spurs I will give to thee."

A light Elfin dance accompanies this, as the fairies dance around him. He fears to accept, since whoever dances with the elves, dies of exhaustion.

"I dare not dance nor dance I may  
Tomorrow is my wedding day."

A strange mixture of pleading and anxiety is here in voice and accompaniment. A silken mantle is vainly offered as bribe, and finally a pile of gold. The knight becomes desperate.

"Thy pile of gold would please me well  
But dance I neither may nor shall."

The last is given with a defiant change of the harmonies which before were entreating. Then comes a threat and its fulfillment, marked in the music by a sudden change of the elf dance to a minor key, then a series of diminished seventh arpeggios in sudden struggle and agony, picturing the following:

"And since thou Sir Oluf wilt not dance with me  
Shall plague and sorrow follow thee.  
She struck his breast in anger sore,  
Such pain he ne'er had borne before,  
And then she placed him on his steed.  
"Now go and meet your bride with speed.""

Here the accompaniment again gives the gallop of the horse, but fainter and fainter until it is lost in the distance. Now follows a mournful and portentous movement in chromatics, a perfect embodiment of apprehension and foreboding, and a set of plain minor chords accompanies the following conversation :

"And as he came to his castle gate  
He saw his mother his coming wait.  
'Oh speak! my son! why such affright  
And why art thou so strange and white?'  
'And should I not seem strange and white?  
The elfdance I have seen this night!'  
'Say on my son so loved and tried,  
What can I tell unto your bride?'  
'Tell her I ride in the woods dark bounds  
To try my horse and try my hounds.'"

Now there suddenly bursts forth in the accompaniment the blare of trumpet phrases, and the bustle of the approaching bridal party. In the description these lines occur :

"They drank of Mead, they drank of wine.  
'Where is Sir Oluf the bridegroom mine?'"

This in the brightest and gayest of tones. The gloom returns, all the blacker by contrast.

"Sir Oluf rides in the wood's dark bounds  
To try his horse and try his hounds."

And then with an impressive recitative the *ballade* ends.

"The bride raised up the tartan red,  
There lay Sir Oluf—and was dead."

The close is much like the wonderful end of the Erlking by Schubert—"In seinen Armen das Kind war todt," yet there is no trace of plagiarism in the work. This then may serve to show our readers what there is in the

school of composition which has been referred to as "gone by forever." It is the duty then of some of our great singers to bring it back, for assuredly no form of song is more generally interesting than the true ballad (not in the misapplied English sense however) and no composer has worked in it more worthily than Carl Loewe.

Of the songs of such composers as Abt, Kücken, Gumbert and others it is unnecessary to speak in a work on German song, for they are not characteristic enough to become national property, but an allusion to the work of the first two in the domain of *Maennerchore* is proper. The male chorus has always been an especially German musical relaxation. It has entered into the warp and woof of Teutonic existence. It seldom aims at ambitious work but presents the geniality and social aspects of our art, and is an important factor in preserving German vocal music among the masses. Abt especially has done much good work in this direction, and while his songs generally only represent the confectionery of music, his male choruses have been singable and pleasing enough to become a pabulum for many societies who desired the enjoyment of music without much of the labor entailed by more intricate works.

## XXV.

### WAGNER AND THE GERMAN OPERA.

WE cannot better conclude a history of German vocal music than by giving a sketch of the life and the theories of the man who came like a thunderstorm to clear the atmosphere of the impurities and vapors which had been engendered in it by a school which elevated mere melodic grace at the expense of poetry. The true union of word and tone began with the ancient Greeks, and just as the early founders of opera (Count Vernio, Peri, Caccini, and Monteverde,) found their justification in the works of Sophocles and Euripides, and as Gluck built upon the same time-honored foundation, so Wagner also endeavored to elaborate the old Athenian idea into a great modern culmination, and in this he succeeded even far beyond the splendors of the ancient theatre. The criticism that Wagner has degraded the voice to an inferior position in a field where it should be ruler — i. e. in the opera — cannot, from the German standpoint, be regarded as altogether a just one: he has but followed out the path opened by the great lied-composers, who

have made the accompaniment an integral part of the musical picture, or the theories of Gluck who held that much could be portrayed by the orchestra which it was impossible for the voice to represent. That he has gone much farther in this direction however, than any of his predecessors cannot be denied, and it may be doubted whether all his bold reforms will be accepted by the musicians of the future. In some portions of his works, (in the substitution of the Melos or modulating recitative, for melody, for example) he has succeeded rather in spite of, than because of, his theories. Yet his extreme views have been well in place in a reformer, for such a radical must always demand somewhat more than he expects to have conceded, and Wagner was of the stern stuff of which true reformers are made. Wagner's youth was of the most trying description and much of the asperity of his character may have proceeded from this cause. Born in the year 1813, in the midst of war and pestilence, he never knew his father, who died of the epidemic fever, which, after the battle of Leipzig, raged among the inhabitants of that unhappy city. Fortunately fate soon sent a stepfather who took in him the kindest interest, and provided well for the large family of which William Richard Wagner was the ninth child. The boy exhibited no very wonderful talents in childhood; like Schumann, Brahms, and Beethoven, his genius ripened slowly. He was not even comparable to these in having had a musical childhood, and his stepfather died without

having any inkling of the genius of the boy of whom he had become so fond.

Yet he was not — like Sir Walter Scott — accounted a dullard during these early years, but only a moderately gifted, fairly intelligent child. Poetry became his earliest passion, and the bombastic verses and dramas of his juvenile muse, remind one forcibly of the similar works of the young De Quincy, for in his first tragedy he made such an indiscriminate slaughter of his characters (killing forty of them before the last act) that he was obliged to conclude his sanguinary tragedy with their ghosts. Even this ludicrous effect may serve to show that vastness which was a characteristic of the composer from the very beginning. Wagner had almost no musical instruction, yet drew his inspiration from the very best source in the world. It has been said that Beethoven had but a single pupil — Ferdinand Ries — yet history must modify this statement sufficiently to add, that he had a second and far greater pupil after his death, in the shape of a young man who studied his every score with such avidity that, at eighteen not a musician in all Germany knew the works of the master so thoroughly. This *furor* was awakened in the young Wagner at sixteen years of age, when he first heard some of Beethoven's symphonies given by the Gewandhaus orchestra at Leipzig. This was the spark that ignited the musical fervor that slumbered all unsuspected in the soul of the youth. Furious self-instruction was followed by a very



short course of study with Gottlieb Müller, whose conservatism exasperated the ambitious student, and led to a speedy end to the lessons. It is noticeable that even in the few compositions which mark this epoch, Wagner declined to busy himself with the short forms (lieder, rondos, etc.,) which marked the early career of other composers, but sprang at once to the larger shapes of music. At last came real instruction, through the efforts of a teacher who was keen enough to see that this lad was a genius, who would not bow to ordinary rules or methods; this was Theodore Weinlig, cantor and director of the Thomas-Schule in Leipzig, a post of great intrinsic importance, and dignified by the fact of its having once been held by John Sebastian Bach. Without too severely curbing the radical tendencies of the young musician, he enforced some study of Mozart's works as the best possible antidote for the tempestuous boldness of his compositions. Even this salutary course of study was but a very short one, and at nineteen we find the almost self-taught composer launched upon a career of which at fifteen he had given no indications whatever. An ineffectual attempt to have a symphony brought out at Vienna finally resulted in Leipzig having the honor of first introducing the composer to the world, and it may be said of Wagner that he is the only composer who made his debut with a symphony at such an early age. The work was performed at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, January 10, 1833. Spite of the fact that the work, now

again being performed in many concerts, has given rise to many just criticisms, it is significant that at that time even, the best reviewers found in it much of boldness, of spirit, and of originality, and universally ascribed it to a man of orchestral experience, rather than to a boy scarcely emerged from the student's chamber. That it achieved no lasting fame for the composer, can easily be imagined, for in Germany a series of constant successes seems necessary to win acknowledgement sufficient to constitute anything but an ephemeral musical reputation. At the age of twenty then, we find this symphonic composer, subsisting upon the scantiest of salaries, as chorus master of a provincial opera company at Würzburg, in Bavaria. His musical career had not been at all brilliant from a pecuniary point of view, and the family viewed the outcome of his efforts with most doubtful minds.\* Nevertheless at this time he had already turned his attention to operatic composition, and was composing his first opera — "Die Feen" ("The Fairies") a work which was never published, the manuscript of which was afterwards given to the King of Bavaria. Fragments of a still earlier opera entitled "The Wedding" seem to have been composed before Wagner came to Würzburg (in 1833) but the work was never completed. The subsequent wanderings from Würzburg to Magdeburg, to Leipzig, and finally to Riga, only show the

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\*Remarks of members of the family to the grandmother of the writer [in 1834] entirely confirm this statement.

young musician trying to obtain a foothold somewhere, and endeavoring at the same time to keep the wolf from the door, and to produce some great work in the operatic field. The hearing of some of the larger Italian operas, such as Bellini's "Norma," and Auber's "Masaniello" led Wagner to throw aside "The Fairies" (without even a single performance) and work in a new direction. A summer's rest at Teplitz was the occasion of his beginning the composition of "Das Liebesverbot," the libretto of which was taken by him from Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure." He had always admired Shakespeare, and this admiration, together with the influence which the Italian school of composition temporarily exerted upon him, led him to labor with much energy at the work. It was produced but a single time, at Magdeburg (1836) and then also consigned to oblivion. At Riga he received what appeared to be a fairly lucrative appointment as music director, and journeyed thither with the young Minna Planer whom he had just married. This marriage, we may here state, was not a happy one, and was also childless. The beautiful actress brought to her arbitrary and ambitious husband an unswerving devotion, but she could not understand the greatness of his purposes nor the eccentric workings of his character. Through no fault of her own the outcome of all her sacrifices and suffering finally resulted in a separation, years afterward, and she died, in 1866, alone.

In Riga, Wagner began a work on a much larger scale

than any he had yet attempted. Again an English author inspired the libretto, and Bulwer's "Rienzi" was begun in the autumn of 1838, with a breadth and power that foreshadowed the pomp at least which was to be an element in the later works of the composer. It was not however constructed upon the art principles which guided the later works from the composer's pen, but followed in the footsteps of Auber and Bellini; that it was greater than the works of these composers was not due to any marked departure from their school, but to the fact that Wagner was a much loftier musician than either of them.

It was "Rienzi" which induced Wagner to leave Riga, for before the opera was half completed, he determined that such a work demanded the paraphernalia of the best equipped operatic stage of the world for its proper presentation. Such a stage was only to be found at the Grand Opera in Paris, and thither Wagner at once went, accompanied by his pretty wife, a huge Newfoundland dog, and the score of the first two acts of his opera. A terrible voyage, during which shipwreck was imminent, led to the first inception of an opera upon the subject of "The Flying Dutchman," and the acquaintance of Meyerbeer, formed en route, led to the hope that "Rienzi" would readily be accepted at the French Metropolis. How bitterly these hopes were blasted is well known, and the subsequent hatred of the French, and the virulence toward Meyerbeer, which distinguished Wagner's literary works, was undoubtedly due to the

succeeding disappointment. The terrible trials which Wagner underwent in Paris were sufficient to enrage a less susceptible nature, yet one cannot but blame the resentment which led this implacable man to shower contemptuous personalities upon the composer who had at least attempted (even if luke-warmly) to befriend him, to extend that hatred afterward to his entire race, and to triumphantly sneer at a fallen, though chivalric nation, as he afterwards did at the French after their disastrous war with Germany, in such a senseless and vehement lampoon as "The Capitulation."

Wagner's first experiences of Paris were composed alternately of semi-starvation and most distasteful hack-work. At first his hopes were placed upon the Grand Opera, and the Conservatoire, but rapidly descending the scale, he was soon perforce, dancing attendance at the smallest Boulevard music houses and theatres, seeking even an engagement as chorus-singer, and being unable to obtain it. Yet Wagner was not a man to yield to adverse circumstances however hopeless they might appear. He sought work at the publishing houses, the newspapers, the musical journals, everywhere, and soon a series of arrangements of operas and popular melodies, even for cornet at times, short songs of not too difficult a character (yet some of them of remarkable beauty) and piquant *feuilletons* on musical subjects, enabled him at least to keep his head above water. The sale of his libretto to "The Flying Dutchman" (it was

almost fraudulently wrested from him by a Parisian manager) added a few francs to his slender purse, and in a little house in the suburb of Meudon, the young wife practiced the most rigid economy to make both ends meet. But all thoughts of a successful Parisian career had been hammered out of the struggling genius. He turned his thoughts again towards his Fatherland. He had now not only "Rienzi" to offer to German managers, but a romantic opera, "The Flying Dutchman," which, spite of the sale of the French rights in the libretto he had hastily but adequately sketched out, at his home in Meudon, hoping now to carry his wares to a more successful market. It was the darkest period of his career; confident in his own genius he had worked on in his lofty flight; the cold refusals of operatic managers, the forced composition of numerous "potboilers," the ascendancy of Meyerbeer and Auber, and the difficulty of combating their power, none of these things seemed to daunt him. In fact, in this part of his career Wagner, the man, stands out in a better light than at almost any other portion of it. And the reward of the manly struggle was to come. The sun of prosperity was even then piercing the adverse clouds that for three years had hung over him.

## XXVI.

### RICHARD WAGNER'S REFORMS.

THE tide turned with the acceptance of "Rienzi" for performance at the grand opera house at Dresden. It did not overpower the struggling young musician, when he heard that his own fatherland was to give him the opportunity he had so long sought. Even in poverty and privation he had always had confidence in his own genius, and felt that it must sometime be recognized, when therefore the news came of the beginning of his real career, he quite philosophically packed up his few belongings, shook the dust of Paris from his feet, and started for Dresden. He however, never forgave the French nation their neglect of his works, and years after, the weak effusion called "The Capitulation," a venomous satire on the people whom war and affliction had so terribly humbled, proved that personally Wagner was a man of the most ungenerous nature. "Rienzi" won an immediate and overwhelming success, and almost in a night, Wagner was transformed from an unknown, halfstarving musician, into a leader among

operatic composers ; this, too, before he had originated a single theory or brought forth any of those iconoclastic ideas which were to revolutionize the operatic school. The management of the Dresden Theatre were glad enough to follow "Rienzi" with "The Flying Dutchman," but strange to say, the public could not reconcile itself to the great difference between the two works and the latter made a half-success merely. The beauty of the work however, attracted Spohr, at that time one of the leading musical directors of Europe, and led to an acquaintance between the two composers. Spohr brought out "The Flying Dutchman" at Cassel, a year later. All these things led to Wagner's receiving the post of Hof-Kapellmeister, (Court Music-director) in Dresden, and thus we find him at thirty, already a recognized leader in composition, holding a high position and quite free from pecuniary care.

For seven years Wagner held this honorable post, and during this time he abundantly proved his ability as an orchestral conductor, giving readings of Beethovens works especially, in a manner that proved how thoroughly he understood the spirit of that master. Naturally however, his strong individuality permeated his work, and led to many adverse criticisms. His labors in the field of operatic composition were by no means suspended : October 19th, 1845 "Tannhäuser" was first given at Dresden, and strange to say, did not make a success. To us, who are quite accustomed to the Wagnerian school



in its more advanced phases, it seems odd that the world should have turned from "Tannhäuser" as being odd, as having a different vein from that to which public and critics had become accustomed. "You are a genius" said the prima donna to Wagner, "but you compose in altogether too strange a manner." Spite of the fact that Wagner partially discarded "Tannhäuser" in later years, we are disposed to class this opera as the very beginning of the new school: it had, to be sure, no great use of the *leit-motif*, no "melos," no series of formulated theories as Wagner's later works had, but it evinced dissatisfaction with the old methods, it was a departure from the conventional school, it was the first step upon a new road, a path which gradually led up to the Trilogy and to "Parsifal." During the later part of Wagner's Dresden career "Lohengrin" was composed, and sketches for "Die Meistersinger" begun. It was characteristic of Wagner that he was never content with his own achievements but continually set up for himself a higher ideal. Fortunately he was of the stuff of which true reformers are made. Combative by nature, able with the essayist's pen, a master of polemics, he was fully able to defend himself from the attacks which soon poured in from all sides, for Tannhäuser, spite of its unsuccessful first performance, held its place in the repertoire, and its every performance was the signal for a host of animadversions. The ill reception of "Tannhäuser" in the city, caused Wagner to become dissatisfied with his position in Dres-

den, but there was at the time no other opening possible for him. He felt that "Lohengrin" went beyond "Tannhäuser" in its boldness, and doubted its reception. The management evidently shared his doubts since only a few fragments from the opera were performed in Dresden in 1848. It was about this time also that Wagner had the inception of the scheme to write a great operatic work which should be of an essentially national character. When Wagner began at a subject no one could ever predict where his development of it would end. For example, his studies of the minne-singer epoch, which resulted in "Tannhäuser" led to a yet greater work upon the resultant era of the master-singers; his studies into the ancient legends of the Holy Grail, which brought forth "Lohengrin," subsequently had a greater fruit (rather than an aftermath) in the loftier "Parsifal," and his choosing of "Siegfried" as a typical German hero, and his musical labors in worthily setting the subject, eventually led to the vastest musical work ever written or contemplated by man, the set of three operas and a great prologue, which form the trilogy which stands as Wagner's representative work.

Such a *magnum opus* did not unfold to his mind all at once; when he began reading the *Nibelungen-lied*, the ancient German classic, with a view to using some part of it, he certainly had no thought of the dimensions his work would assume, but when the idea was once seized upon, a grander idea than ever entered the mind of any

composer, he clung to it with the ardor of a man who had found his life-work. In this episode we can see the true grandeur of Wagner's character, as in others we have been forced to see its littleness. There could be but small hope of recognition for so great and radical a work, pecuniary benefit as a result was entirely out of the question, he could scarcely hope even to live to finish the task, and if he did, where was the management, where the theatre that would undertake its performance? None of these considerations for a moment disturbed this great creator; "if I live to see its completion I shall have lived gloriously, if I die, I shall have died for something beautiful," he wrote to a friend when the tremendous character of the task burst upon his mind. It was owing to the most fortunate conjunction of circumstances that the first-named eventuality was reached; the stars in their courses fought for this battling Sissera; events that seemed adverse at the time turned out in their consequences to be the greatest aids to the scheme. A mingling in the super-heated politics of that time, (1848) an ill-advised speech and an affiliation with revolutionists led to Wagner's falling under the ban of the government and it was only with difficulty and through the assistance of his true-hearted friend Liszt that he was able to escape across the frontier, and we soon find the composer again at Paris, an exile, but now no longer helpless or unknown. France once more declined to appreciate or assist the thoroughly Teutonic composer, and in Switzerland,

during his long banishment, the great life-work began to take shape.

He saw that first of all, his reforms must be explained to a world that was wedded to an effete school of operatic composition, and he began writing pamphlets in which the meaning of his efforts was set forth in the most earnest manner. Like all great reformers he found his road to success in agitation, and a virulent attack upon the influence of the Jews in music made such a sensation that his pamphlets on more legitimate subjects, which until then were but little known, at once became widely read. Liszt aided him in Germany with unremitting zeal; he brought out "Lohengrin" in Weimar, and when the critics poured forth censure, scorn and weak wit upon the new school,\* he also took up the pen and defended it with intelligence and vigor. Yet the performance was a success and he was able to write to Wagner "Thus far have we brought the cause; now give to us a new work that we may advance it still further;" and when a few years later he visited Wagner and heard portions of this new work, he said of it: "It towers above our whole art epoch as Mont Blanc towers above its surrounding mountains."

During this long period of exile Wagner became acquainted with the philosophical works of Schopenhauer, and these exerted a strong and lasting influence upon his

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\* "Lohengrin has been performed; violin strings have risen in price," wrote one of these jesting reviewers.

views of music. It seems strange, however, that the philosopher did not fully appreciate the labors of his ardent disciple. The composition of the Trilogy—"The Ring of the Nibelungs"—occupied, intermittently, the time from 1849 to 1874, but of course there were other events connected with the period of exile which could be chronicled were we writing a detailed life of Wagner, a task too large for a general history such as this; a trip to London, and some concerts there, for example, proved to the composer that England cared nothing for his advanced theories, and was by no means ready to take Mendelssohn down from his pedestal.

More important, however, was the event which broke the monotony of his labors in 1857, when, desiring at least that his theories should have a hearing before the vaster work could be completed, he composed an opera in which all his views were carried out in a less extended and grandiose shape, an opera which made no extreme demands upon orchestra, scenery, or numbers of participants, the first opera by which he was willing that his peculiar views should be judged—"Tristan and Isolde." It is not our purpose to give in detail the events which attended the gradual acceptance of the later works of Wagner, nor can we give all the views regarding music in general and his own music in particular which he gave in a few thousand pages of printed matter and which have only recently been collated in their entirety; but a condensation of some of his leading theories may not be

amiss. Historical accuracy, dramatic unity, and a proper relationship of poetry and music were the foundation stones. Wagner held that music was to be the hand-maid of poetry, that in their wedding Poetry was the man, Music the woman, that the former was to take precedence. He was not the inventor of the *leit-motif* any more than Beethoven was the inventor of the Sonata or Symphony, but he used it with a new significance. The *leit-motif*, or guiding motive, may be characterized as a musical figure having a certain dramatic significance, i. e., connected with some person or event. With Wagner these figures become the most condensed musical thought, representing sometimes in a few notes a characteristic idea. We can cite for example the stern power of the name-motive or warning-motive in *Lohengrin* where that knight forbids Elsa ever to ask his name



Nie soll'st du mich be - fra - gen,

which reappears in the orchestra whenever the latter, led on by a fatal curiosity and the artful devices of Ortrud, transgresses the command. Such an employment of figures has given a new kind of intellectuality to music, which now demands to be studied in a different way, for example, from the complexities of the contrapuntal school of Bach. Form, Wagner very largely abolished; he held that emotion was in its essence the enemy of pre-

scribed form, and that the grand aria, with its return to the chief theme after the central theme was not true art. Continuity was a *sine qua non* with Wagner; the Italian opera with its divisibility into arias, cavatinas, cabalettas, etc., etc., with neat little pauses to permit the applause to enter and to make encores feasible, was not for him; the opera was to be in every sense a complete whole, and to have no interruptions. Naturally tonality also became a vague matter with this composer, and the set relationship of keys was done away with, perfect freedom of modulation was to be allowed. The substitution of a melodic recitative, the "Melos" for rhythmic tunes was probably the most radical step of all. Tune is after all the foundation of music, and however artificial the superstructure may become, it is to be doubted whether rhythmic melody can ever be banished from music. These are but a few of the reforms which the great composer gave to modern opera. He was fortunate enough to live to see his views accepted by the leading musicians of the world, to achieve a triumph beyond that won by any other composer during life.

In May, 1864, King Louis II of Bavaria ascended the throne, and Wagner was at once lifted above all his cares and trials by the solicitude of this monarch, who was his most sincere admirer. His political disabilities removed, his cherished schemes promoted, fortune smiled upon him in many ways, but in none more than in allowing him to win the heart and eventually the hand of Cosima,

the daughter of Liszt, a woman who knew the nobler side of his nature, and who became during his later years his truest helpmate and friend. It was under happy conditions then that his most genial opera—"The Mastersingers of Nuremburg"—was completed. Spite of the loftiness of the *Trilogy* and of "*Parsifal*," "*The Mastersingers*" will ever remain Wagner's most enjoyable work. It does not take us into the realm of gods and goddesses but tells us a story of human passion in a human manner. It charms by its unforced manner, its autobiographical confidences (like those of Dickens in "*David Copperfield*"), and by its grand style of humor, almost like the scathing satirical vein of Aristophanes.

In 1876 came at last the fruition of Wagner's labor; the great *trilogy* was performed in the worthiest possible manner in a theatre built in Bayreuth especially for it, and even after this great triumph the composer at the age of 65 was able to add yet another work of amazing power—"Parsifal"—to the long list of his labors. Scarcely had the echoes of the success of this subsided, and the composer gone to Venice for well-earned repose, when with great suddenness the long life came to its termination. The details of Wagner's death on February 13th, 1883, need not be retold;\* it was well that the impatient and vehement nature had not to suffer long and wasting illness nor see a decline of his powers. When the light went out it had not lost any of its lustre; Wag-

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\* See "*Last Hours of Great Composers*," by Louis C. Elson.



ner was still the foremost of living composers. Whether all of Wagner's theories will stand the test of time cannot be foretold, but we may regard him at least as a most salutary thunder storm which cleared the musical atmosphere and placed German vocal art in a clearer and purer surrounding. Even those who disclaim sympathy with his views have been forced to pay him the homage of imitation. Verdi no longer dares to use nonsensical libretti and commit all kinds of historical anachronisms, because of the power of Wagner; Gounod no longer writes pretty airs in 12-8 rhythm to catch the public ear but attempts "typical melodies" and dramatic motives—vainly. Almost all of the larger vocal forms have been influenced in some degree by the great iconoclast. With such a man, and with such an influence, we may appropriately conclude our history. Its endeavor has been to show that while the reverence for Germany in Symphonic and Sonata work is not misplaced, it is unjust not to acknowledge her deeds in vocal music as well. Not as thoroughly singable as the Italian school of composition, the German vocal works have none the less shown us the noblest expressions of musical thoughts, and have proved that our Art attains its highest power when word and tone unite to elevate the human soul and to unlock for it the gates of a paradise to which no other art possesses the key.

[THE END.]

**LAST HOURS**

—OF—

**GREAT COMPOSERS**

—BY—

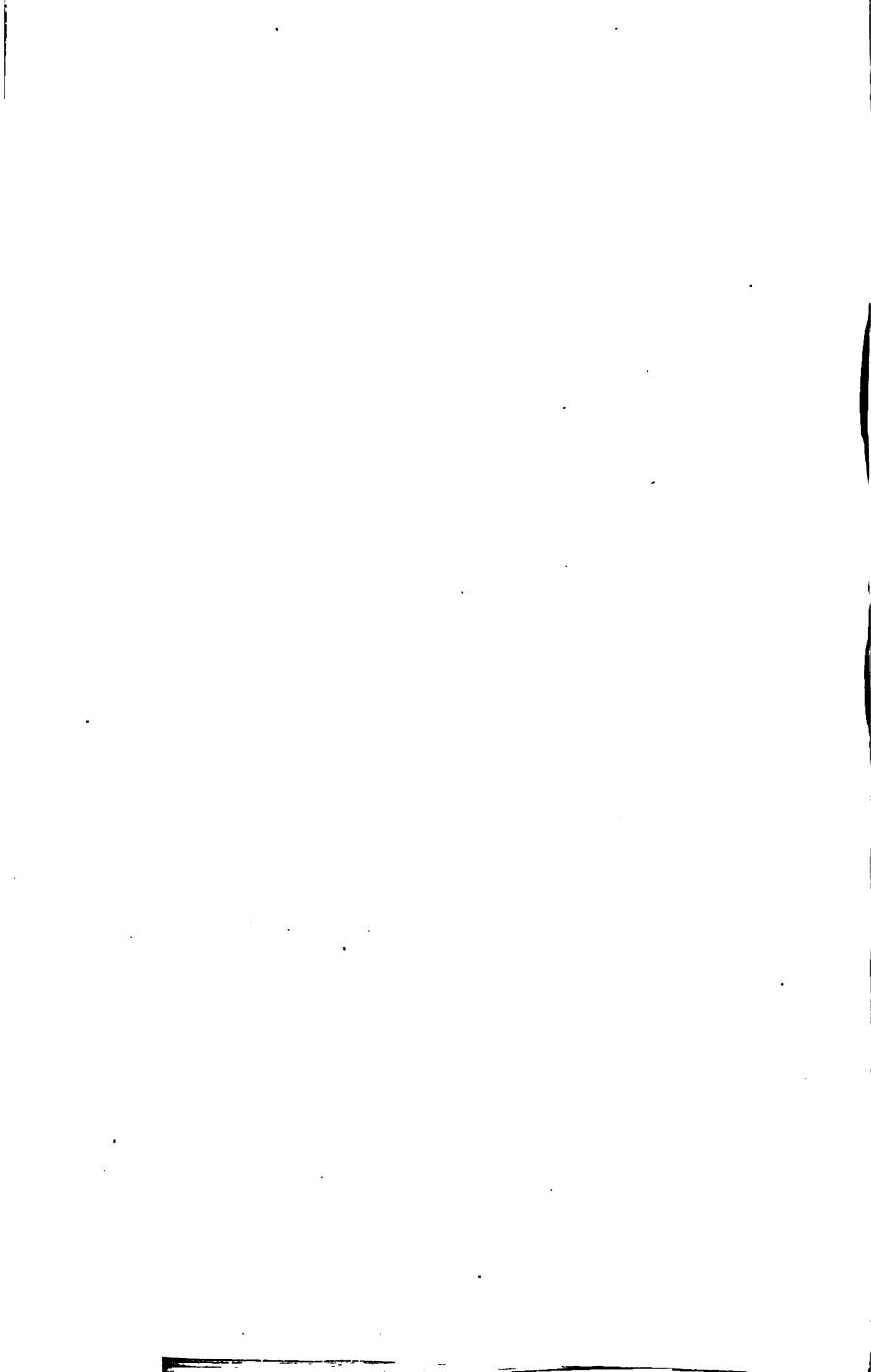
**LOUIS C. ELSON.**



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# Last Hours of Great Composers.

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## CHAPTER I.

ONE of the weakest points in musical biographies is the fact that so little detail is given concerning the decease of the various great masters; and this has opened the door to a great many slanders, intimating that this or that composer shortened his days by a career of dissipation. A few brief facts concerning the last hours of some of the great masters may not only be of interest, but will counteract many false impressions left in the minds of many musical readers, caused by lack of detail in the biographies aforesaid.

Bach's later years were troubled by an ailment which he had brought upon himself by too diligent study, by constant writing of music, and, most of all, by engraving (in copperplate) some of his own works. He became blind. Two unsuccessful operations upon his eyes gave a severe shock to his general health, which up to that time had been hearty. He felt that his death was approaching; yet, true to the religion of his art, he dictated to his son-in-law the chorale, "Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein." Finally, July 28, 1750, his career terminated with an attack of

apoplexy. He was sixty-five years old. He had been an entirely domestic life (apart from his music) and he had twenty children. The city of Leipzig gave to him a fine funeral, and then forgot all about the family. His widow was dependent on charity at her decease in 1760.

Händel's career was in some respects in contrast with that of Bach. He was never married, and never felt any inclination toward the joys of domestic life. He was irascible in the highest degree. He became religious and devout in his later years; yet was never wholly weaned from his chief fault,—gluttony. He also became blind in his later years; and the three operations which were attempted, undoubtedly had an influence in hastening his end, although he continued to play the organ in public even after his total blindness. His death occurred in London, April 14, 1759 (although one authority has given the date as April 13) and was met with calm and Christian fortitude. His attending physician says that Händel was perfectly aware of his approaching dissolution, and expressed the wish that he might die on Good Friday, and rise to meet his Lord on Easter day. This wish was very nearly fulfilled. The last twenty years of his life were in almost all respects exemplary, and his failings must all be sought for in his younger days.

Haydn's career presents chiefly but a single fault,—servility; and even this was largely due to the humble

positions which musicians were obliged to occupy in his day. He, like Bach and Händel, attained to a ripe old age, expiring May 31, 1809, at the age of seventy-seven, his death being largely due to the infirmities of age. The incidents attending his decease prove how thoroughly his art was interwoven with his life. *The Seasons* is said to have killed him; that is, he never recovered from the strain of composing that great work. We shall find later that other composers are said to owe their deaths to some of their masterpieces. Among his very latest works was a vocal quartet called *Der Greis*, picturing an old man's weakness and fatigue. The words of the opening bars, wedded to music graphically suited to the limping gait and weak accents of age, seemed so applicable to his own case that he wrote them as a conclusion to his last unfinished work, a string quartet, and had them printed upon a card which he gave to the numerous friends who came to inquire about his health. The card (translated) was as follows:—

*Molto adagio.*

Gone, a-las! is all my strength;  
Old and weak am I.

*Joseph Haydn.*



Haydn's last appearance in public was at a great performance of his *Creation* at the University, March 27, 1808. He was then so weak that he had to be carried thither in a chair. It is said that at the words, "Let there be light; and there was light," the clouds which had obscured the sun through the day rolled away, and bright rays darted into the hall. This, with the majesty of the performance, moved Haydn so that he excitedly rose and, pointing upwards, exclaimed, "It came from above!" His agitation grew so intense that it was thought best to remove him before the end of the performance. At the door of the hall, he turned and raised his hands, as if to bestow a last blessing upon the orchestra and musical public whom he was to leave forever. Almost his last musical act during the illness which followed was to be carried to the piano, and to play over three times, with great feeling, the national hymn which he himself had composed, "Gott erhalte unser Kaiser."

Mozart's last hours afford more of pathos than those of any other composer. In the first place, he did not die at a ripe old age, as the composers above-mentioned, but passed away at thirty-five. Secondly, he did not die full of honors, but in poverty, with which his whole life had been a struggle. It is scarcely natural, then, to expect to find the same placid resignation or the high religious feeling with which Handel and Haydn approached their end in the closing hours

of Mozart's existence. He thought of his poor family left unprovided for, and of the sadness that he should die, as he thought, before he had shown the full power of the musical spirit within him. Mozart's whole career had been embittered by the narrow prejudices of musicians less learned and able than himself, who had formed many cabals against him. It is small wonder, then, that, stricken suddenly down by an incomprehensible illness, he should have become infatuated with the idea that some one had poisoned him. The physician himself did not thoroughly understand the complaint, and hastened the composer's end by mistaken remedies, such as cold water bandages, for example. Severe commentators have said that Mozart's death was due to his drinking habits. This we can dismiss as a decidedly mistaken conclusion. The great number and magnitude of Mozart's works show plainly that he did not neglect his labors; and the faculty which he had of imbibing long draughts of punch is shared with him by many a true child of the wild city of Vienna, without sharing any odium. The fact is, that Mozart was delicate in childhood, and suffered many diseases, which made his system prone to certain attacks. His constant labor and feverish anxieties combined to do the rest. The disease which carried him to the grave was one which could be easily accounted for: it was malignant typhus fever.

## CHAPTER II.

PASSING from the sad end of Mozart, we come to the death of the world's greatest composer,—Beethoven. Few have appreciated how much of true religion lay in the brusque nature of this genius. Because he was very reticent in speaking of religious topics and because he was known to be republican in his aspirations, many have jumped to the conclusion that he had no religious convictions whatever. Never was a hasty conclusion more erroneous. It is true, however, that he had no formal creed; and the only side of this part of his nature which he showed to the world was a broad humanitarianism. This showed itself in his choosing Schiller's "Ode to Joy" as the *finale* of his greatest and last symphony. This ode is one of the noblest voicings of a lofty humanitarianism. Yet it must be confessed that Beethoven was not very fond of the Bible, and very rarely quoted it, save the single passage, "Love one another." Perhaps the best proof that Beethoven at least thought reverently upon religious topics is found in the following sentences which he copied out himself and had constantly hanging in his room:—

"I am that which is."

"I am all that is, that was, and that shall be. No mortal man hath lifted my veil."

"He is alone by himself, and to Him alone do all things owe their being."

This may be accepted as the chief part of Beethoven's theology.

Beethoven's death was not so sad or so unexpected as that of Mozart or Schubert. He was not cut down in the midst of his labors and before his promise had borne full fruition. The pathetic part of his existence lay, not in his decease, but rather in the deafness which had clouded all his later years. The physician who attended Beethoven during his last illness thus writes of him:—

Beethoven said that he had always enjoyed, from his youth up, a robust state of health, which never seemed to vary. He was accustomed to any amount of work, and excess in this direction never hurt him. Even late work during the night hours did not affect his iron constitution. He generally composed until three or four in the morning, and then took some sleep, always finding five hours amply sufficient; and immediately after breakfast he went to work again, and continued until two in the afternoon. His deafness began in his thirtieth year with a hemorrhoidal trouble and a humming in the ear. Soon after this, a dyspeptic trouble began. Beethoven always detested medicine and doctors, and tried to bring back his appetite by great indulgence in alcoholic stimulants and in long walks. It is astonishing to note how careless Beethoven was in every detail of hygiene. He seemed to do all that he could to break down his constitution.

In addition to the night hours, the stimulants, and the fatiguing walks mentioned above, he would sit down, heated and worn, in the open air, utterly oblivious as to any state of the weather, and would compose (or take notes of musical thoughts) for hours together.

After one of these imprudent sojourns in the country, feeling himself growing weaker, he suddenly resolved to go to Vienna. As if to hasten his end, he went in a damp season and made the journey in a *milk wagon*! Stopping on the road, he was taken with fever, slept in a cold room, drank numerous glasses of ice-water, and then went on in his open cart. It must be borne in mind that Beethoven had also, before this, been troubled most severely with dropsy, that he had submitted to surgical operations, and that this disease was interwoven with all the ailments which now beset him. Spite of the foolhardy journey, Dr. Wawruch soon had the great composer on the road to health again, when an unfortunate relapse—provoked, it is said, by a violent fit of anger—occurred, and all hope of recovery fled. We need trouble the reader with no more pathological details. The severest symptoms of dropsy told plainly the nature of the illness. Beethoven knew that his end was approaching, and would not take any medicine. An assistant doctor, an old friend of Beethoven's, was called in at this time, and unfortunately ordered him large doses of iced punch,—a remedy which Beethoven took

only too gladly, but which was very pernicious in its final effects.' Four months he lay in a gradual weakening state. During this time, he saw Hummel, young Hiller, Schubert, and many other musicians who constantly came to pay their respects to the dying musical giant. He also studied the scores of Händel, and was greatly impressed by them. Among his latest words was a quotation from the *Messiah*, in response to a hope expressed by his physician that the approaching spring would benefit his health. He replied: "My journey is ended, The physician who can aid me 'his name shall be called Wonderful,'" a sentence inspired by a deep sense of his situation. At last, the supreme moment came. The doctor could not speak the words which banished hope. He wrote on a slip of paper that death was near, and that, if there were any duties as a citizen or as a Christian which Beethoven had left undone, they must be performed at once. Beethoven read the slip with the most absolute calmness. "Call in a minister," said he. Soon after, he lost consciousness. The following day, he died. A more impressive death-scene cannot be imagined. It was a day of tempest. A heavy snow-storm was raging, accompanied by vivid lightning and heavy peals of thunder. It was as if all the elements had come to memorize the dreadful moment. Within the chamber lay the composer, unconscious, and breathing heavily. At six o'clock in the afternoon, a vivid

flash lit up the room, followed by a deafening crash, of thunder. Beethoven opened his eyes, raised his hand aloft as if to answer the call, and was dead. Thus passed away the greatest tone-master and one of the loftiest natures of the world. If he was erring, impetuous, and wayward, he was also suffering and sympathetic; and during his lifetime none could understand what beauty lay beneath that rugged and uncouth exterior. It is a mistake to suppose that Beethoven died unhonored or poor. The names of the visitors during his last illness disprove the former, and the fact that several bank shares of considerable value were hidden in his room does away with the latter supposition. Yet he himself said frequently during his illness that he had no resources whatever, and from this many have argued that Beethoven was a miser. It is far more probable that, being a man of very disorderly habits, he had placed these shares in different hiding places for safe keeping, and then forgotten their existence.

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### CHAPTER III.

SCHUBERT was present at the funeral of Beethoven; and, on returning from the obsequies, he, in company with Lachner and Randhartinger, entered an inn, and in German custom drank a toast to the memory of the departed composer. A second glass was emptied to the composer who should next follow him to the grave.

The friends little thought that this composer was then present. Franz Schubert was the next of the famous composers whom Death claimed as his own.

That Schubert had led an irregular life can scarcely be denied, yet the fair-minded biographer can easily prove that the accounts of his excesses have been greatly magnified and exaggerated. His enormous list of compositions proves beyond dispute that his life could not have been a very dissipated one, and it is more probable that the ardor of composition shortened his days than that his bohemian habits should have undermined his constitution. He was not quite thirty-two years old when he died; yet he had composed nearly five hundred songs (possibly even more, for many must have been lost), some eighteen or twenty operatic works, nine or ten symphonies (for here authorities differ), eight large sacred works, besides part-songs, string quartets, pianoforte sonatas, and other works innumerable. No person of entirely irregular habits could have brought forth such an entire library of original compositions. Let the reader imagine Beethoven dying at such an early age, and judge what the world would have known of him! A single symphony (largely in the Haydn vein) and a few original piano sonatas would have been all, and these would soon have been forgotten.

Of Schubert's religion, it is difficult to speak; for he was more reserved on this point even than Beethoven.



He was of a most affectionate nature, ever ready to oblige a friend, or, when he had any means, to do a kindness. His love for his father and for his brothers was strongly marked.

At the very close of his short life, he became aware that he was deficient in contrapuntal studies, and made arrangements to take a course of lessons of Sechter, who was then the leading authority in Vienna in this field. These lessons were never taken. Already the premonitions of illness had set in. Giddiness and rushes of blood to the head were very frequent. On the evening of Oct. 31, 1828, he sat in the tavern where he generally took his meals, when suddenly an intense loathing for food came upon him. From that time until his death, he could scarcely be brought to touch any solid nourishment. On the 11th of November, we find him writing a pathetic note to his friend, the poet Schober, graphically describing his weak state, and begging the loan of some books to read in his lonely and invalid state. Schober did not immediately respond; but it must be urged in extenuation that none of Schubert's friends felt any anxiety about him, as the illness was not believed to be a severe one. Some of Schubert's friends only heard of his death after the funeral. Schubert's very last musical works were the songs contained in the last part of *Die Winterreise* ("The Winter Journey"); and it is a striking coincidence that these songs embody the sadness and hopelessness of his own career. One of them

reads like a premonition. Schubert spent almost every afternoon, from five to seven o'clock, in Bogner's coffee-house and tavern, smoking his pipe, sipping coffee, and meeting his friends who gathered there. In *Das Wirthshaus* ("The Tavern") of this set of songs, he pictures the weary wanderer seeking repose in the churchyard as a tavern of rest. It very soon became his peaceful abode.

One cannot imagine a more desolate picture than Schubert, in his last days, sitting up in bed, correcting the proofs of these hopeless, despairing strains, which culminate in the "Hurdy-Gurdy Player," in which all the callousness of a life of patient endurance seems concentrated, while the accompaniment—the tones of the cracked instrument—rings out with a terribly pathetic contrast to the condition of the singer. The same contrast existed between the grace of Schubert's music and the rigor of his life. He himself complained that the songs which he had written in circumstances of deepest distress seeme to please the public most.

"The anguish of the singer  
Made the beauty of the strain."

Schubert suffered no pain. His condition was one of extreme weakness and great depression. One cannot wonder at this, when one imagines the composer entirely intent on these gloomy songs, deserted by all his friends (an honorable exception must be made of Randhartinger), who either dreaded lest the composer had an in-

fectionous disease or else made light of the whole matter; without any pecuniary resources, and utterly unfit by nature to cope with the practical world. The doctors feared a nervous fever; but it was typhus (which had carried off Mozart at an early age, in somewhat similar circumstances) which eventually set in, and delirium clouded the last days. In his ravings, he frequently spoke of Beethoven, and showed how deeply his music had impressed his mind. Almost the very last music which he heard in life was Beethoven's C-sharp minor quartet, and this made a very deep impression upon him. Once, in a lucid moment, Schubert turned to the doctor and said in a solemn, earnest tone, "Here, here is my end," and then turned his face to the wall. At three o'clock, on the afternoon of Wednesday, Nov. 19, 1828, Schubert's troubles found an end. The stern moralist can forgive him much, because he suffered much. Of all the numerous cases of genius struggling against poverty, none in musical history was so marked, so intense, as that of Franz Schubert. Besides him, even Mozart seems rich. Selling great *Lieder*, which rank as the masterpieces of the world in their school, for *twenty cents apiece* was a depth which no other composer has had to sound. Yet Schubert's life had its gleams of sunshine, and through all his trials his beloved art was a consolation to him. Indeed, one can imagine his whole soul entering into the noble harmonies of his song "To Music:"

"Thou holy Art, in many sad, gray hours,  
When all the skies seemed dull and dark to be,  
Hast thou upheld me with thy noble powers,  
And oped a higher, better world to me,

"Oft has a sound from thy great harp immortal  
Seemed like a balm upon my heart to roll,  
And raised me up even to heaven's high portal,  
Thou holy Art, I thank thee from my soul."

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#### CHAPTER IV.

WITH the name of Schubert is often associated that of Schumann. For, if Schubert was the one composer to whom the German *Lied* owes its origin, Schumann was as surely the one who brought it to its highest development. If Schubert's songs sprang from his poetic, tender nature, Schumann's burst from a passion which moved his nature to the very depths,—his love for Clara Wieck; and who can say but that the violence of the emotions which moved him before he finally obtained permission to marry her may have had an important share in wrecking a mind which had from the first a tendency toward insanity? Melancholia was in his family, and, spite of his happy marriage, soon showed itself in Schumann. Already, in his youth, he had suffered an attack, which seemed to threaten his mind, but which soon passed away. But, throughout his later years, a nervous sensitiveness was apparent, which boded no good to his mental state. The affection for his wife and the tenderness with which she watched over him put off

the evil day for a time. In 1844 there came a severe attack of nervous prostration, undoubtedly caused by overwork; and, for a time, he was forbidden even to listen to music. This again passed away, but left marked traces behind. It showed itself first in his conducting. His *tempi* grew slower. He was unable to follow and understand a rapid movement. The writer of these articles has known many musicians who have played under Schumann in this epoch; and they all concur in stating that he stood on the conductor's stand silent, moody, and abstracted, his lips pursed, as if whistling the melody to himself, and often so absent-minded that he forgot to give the signal to begin to the orchestra, who would start the works by arrangement among themselves.

Delusions now began to grow upon the mind of Schumann with a rapidity which caused the greatest alarm to his friends. He began to believe in Spiritualism, and maintained that at one of the *seances* Beethoven had been present and had rapped out the theme of one of his symphonies to him. He also claimed that the spirits of Schubert and Mendelssohn came to him with a theme which they desired him to work out. It will be remembered that it was Schumann who rescued to the world Schubert's greatest symphony; and now he began to feel that Schubert desired him to finish the "unfinished symphony," and haunted him for that purpose. It was natural that "false hearing," a malady often connected

with mania, should set in. Schumann began to imagine that he continually heard a solemn "A"; and, finally, this tone began to evolve phrases, and even whole compositions sprang from it in the mind of the unhappy sufferer. This note seemed to his distracted mind the keynote of the universe. His deplorable condition was made yet more so by the fact that at times all these fancies would leave him and he would become aware of his true state. In these lucid intervals, he would beg his wife to send him to an asylum; but, meanwhile, he would continue at work unremittingly.

Finally, the crisis came. On the afternoon of Feb. 7, 1854, a small party of friends were at his house; and, although Schumann was taciturn and did not mingle in the conversation, his friends were so well used to this silence on his part that they took no notice of it. A short time after, he withdrew from the house unnoticed, walked to the bridge spanning the Rhine, and threw himself into the stream, seeking death beneath its rushing waters. He was rescued by some sailors; but the shock was too much for his jaded brain, and he was changed from a morbid hypochondriac into a raving maniac. He was taken to the asylum at Enderich, near Bonn, where he remained until his death, two years after. Yet once more his strong physical constitution triumphed for a short time, and an interval of calm and comparative reason set in; and again, with his unflagging zeal for art, he recommenced composition. He

demanding the manuscript of a *Spirit-Theme*, on which he had been at work before his attempted suicide, so earnestly that it was judged best not to deny him; and he immediately began to finish this his last work, a series of variations. These, however, already show the hand of decay which was laid upon his great genius; and it was judged best not to gratify a morbid curiosity by publishing them. The manuscript was carefully preserved, however; and Brahms subsequently founded a beautiful set of four-hand variations (op. 23) upon it, which were published, and are among the composer's most successful piano works, and in which, it is said, the theme is but little altered from the state in which Schumann left it.

Gradually, all Schumann's violent insanity disappeared. He was able to receive friends, to correspond with them, and to play upon the piano. Those who have heard him play in these sad days say that occasionally an idea would seem to struggle for utterance, but generally the whole was spasmodic and meaningless. But a profound melancholy seized upon him. His wearied form grew weaker, and death soon mercifully came to his relief. He died in the arms of his wife, July 29, 1856, at the age of only forty-six years. Schumann's life and death are in striking contrast to Schubert's. The former of high position, free from pecuniary care, greatly honored during his lifetime, and surrounded by all that love and money could furnish during his dying days. Schubert, of low position, constantly in need of even the smallest sums to keep the

wolf from the door, entirely slighted by all but a few boon companions as poor as himself, and entirely deserted, save by a faithful brother, during his last extremity. Yet who shall say which of these two was the happier? All Schumann's days were at the highest tension. Only one great stream of sunshine came upon his life; and this was when, in 1840, he was wedded to the woman whom he had adored with a steady, faithful attachment. To that marriage and its subsequent happiness, the world owes the greatest works of Robert Schumann.

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#### CHAPTER V.

WE have found, in tracing the last hours of great composers thus far, that all the deep sentiment, the tenderness of their lives seemed to concentrate in the supreme hour of their death; and, in almost every case, the dramatic element has been present in a strong degree at their death-bed. No life, however, could display more of these qualities in its departure than that of Chopin. He had never been of a robust nature; and his personality was, like his music, ethereal. Chopin was the idol of Parisian society, and was a welcome guest even in the highest *salons*. His delicate frame, the cough with which he was afflicted, and the hectic flush of his cheek only made him more interesting, and awakened the sympathetic feeling of those who came in contact with him.



The drawing-room which he frequented most during his later years was that of his intimate friend Madame Dudevant,—George Sand. The writer of this has had the good fortune to know one of the visitors at this celebrated house, and from him has gleaned some of the description of Chopin's personal characteristics. It was a noteworthy scene, this drawing-room, when the circle of friends was complete. A regal-looking woman with large, thoughtful eyes, and with a more placid demeanor than Frenchwomen generally have, was the central figure: this was George Sand. A young man of surpassing attractiveness of person and grace of manner, of witty conversation, and of almost constant vivacity was also there: this was Franz Liszt. On a reclining chair was stretched a figure which looked more like a corpse than a living being, only the eyes were so piercing and bright that they seemed almost demoniacal when contrasted with the impassive figure. Occasionally, a lively jest or a keen sarcasm would pass the pale lips, but a complaint never: this was Heinrich Heine, king of satirists and most pitiable of invalids. It would be impossible to describe all who were present, since all the brains and genius of France was represented; but the slim, pale man with delicate, oval face, but rather prominent Roman nose, who occasionally interrupted the conversation by a prolonged paroxysm of coughing, was Chopin, upon whom already disease had made its inroads.

But, although this society life had an infinite charm,

it was of all things the worst for the nervous and excitable composer. The doctors who had already been consulted had prescribed periods of rest and absolute quiet. But rest was impossible to Chopin, who, overrun with piano pupils, needed the income which his teaching brought him; and quiet was irksome to the man of society. In 1840, already his lungs were seriously affected. George Sand watched over him with affectionate care. The summers which he spent at her house at Nohant always brought an amelioration of his illness; but the winter of Parisian gayety always destroyed what had been built up, and more. Madame Sand has often been aspersed by Chopin's biographers as having become tired of Chopin as he became more and more an invalid, and having finally broken off the friendship, when Chopin needed her the most. This is partially true, but they forget to present the other side of the picture. Chopin's illness was of a most lingering description, lasting nearly ten years; and often, during this time, he became petulant and made great demands, with an invalid's selfishness and peevishness. Madame Sand certainly made sacrifices for him which demand recognition. She left Paris and lived a life of retirement for a season, that she might give to Chopin the absolute rest which his physicians commanded and which he could not well afford to take. But that these sacrifices did not continue to the end is undoubtedly true.\* It would be

\*Chopin's friends maintain that in the novel *Lucrezia Floriani* Madame Sand pictured Chopin and herself. The authoress, however, denies this.

most painful to follow the stages of Chopin's malady through their long course. His cough grew constantly more and more hacking, and his strength at times failed him utterly. His faithful pupil Gutmann was now his dearest friend and protector, watching over him constantly, and ready to make any sacrifice to lighten the suffering of his master. In 1847, the efforts of the physician and his friends seem to have been temporarily successful; for Chopin again took up his labors. He arranged a trip to England, and before leaving Paris determined to give a farewell concert. Chopin seldom appeared in public, as his nature was not formed for the career of the concert stage; yet on this occasion the character of the audience and the evidence of its high appreciation led him to excel his previous efforts. The English and Scottish tour was a triumphant one; but the late hours of society in the former country, and the raw climate of the latter, only debilitated Chopin still further. In 1849, he was again in Paris; and now he was so ill that all work was at last suspended. He knew that his end was near, and expressed the wish to be buried in Père-la-Chaise, beside Bellini, whom he loved much. His sister Louise hastened from Warsaw to soothe her brother's last moments. Yet even now a slight improvement set in; and he engaged new lodgings (No. 12 Place Vendôme), and made every arrangement to furnish them, even to the minutest details. By a strange irony of fate, while the undertakers were placing

his body in the casket, the house furnishers were arranging his new lodgings.

In his last days, M. Gutmann and Chopin's sister never left him; and the Countess Delphine Potocka, his pupil and friend, to whom his celebrated *Valse*, Op. 64, No. 1, is dedicated, hastened to Paris on learning of his dangerous state. During one of the last days, she stood at the foot of the bed of her teacher, weeping, when Chopin awoke and gazed at her in wonder. Tall, slim, extremely beautiful, and clothed in white, he took her for an angel sent to claim his troubled spirit. When he recognized her at last, he begged of her to sing. The piano was rolled to the door of the room; and the countess, conquering her emotion, sang Stradella's "Prayer."\* During the music, Chopin was exalted above his suffering; but, when it ceased, he became worse, and begged for more. By an irresistible impulse all fell on their knees. What a fitting scene for the pencil of an artist,—the lovely countess at the piano singing, while the tears were yet wet upon her cheeks; the dying composer hanging upon the tones in ecstasy; the grieving friends kneeling around in devotion! The next day, he was calmer, but very weak, and demanded to see the priest at once. The Abbé Jelowicki administered the extreme unction according to the rites of the

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\*This is the song known as "*Pietà, Signore*," "*Pity, O Saviour*," and is said once to have saved the life of Stradella. Late commentators throw doubt upon the anecdote and even on the authorship of the song, and ascribe it to Gluck.

Catholic Church, and then one by one he took leave of his friends. From this time to the end, M. Gutmann sat beside him. On the 17th of October, 1849, he died. His last act was characteristic. He asked in a faint voice, "Who is near me?" On being told that it was M. Gutmann, he bent down to kiss his hand, and in this last act of love and gratitude expired. He was buried in Père-la-Chaise, between Bellini and Cherubini. He was always fond of flowers; and, at his funeral, his casket was smothered in roses, and the entire room was buried in floral offerings. Chopin was greatly beloved, and his personal nature must have been of the sweetest before sickness had racked his frame. Yet there is little in his life which could leave a lasting impress upon the reader. Schumann's pure love for Clara Wieck, Schubert's brave combat with poverty, Mozart's cheerful spirit under adversity, Beethoven's broad humanitarianism, Bach's piety and modesty,—all appeal more to us than the society life (gentle and kind though it was) of Frederic Chopin.

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## CHAPTER VI.

MENDELSSOHN attracts our attention as a composer who had, like Chopin, all the advantages and temptations of the life of society, yet was entirely free from the excesses of the latter, and throughout lived an exemplary and praiseworthy life. His faults were an intense artistic

jealousy and, possibly, a certain degree of self-conceit,—his friends might justly call it self-esteem; but his virtues were so many that one can readily cite him as a model of the refined, cultured, and well-balanced gentleman,—the ideal of the advanced musician. The cause of this may be found in the excellent influences which surrounded his childhood and youth. His father, although entirely a man of business, displayed so much care in the education of his children that it could not but bear fruit in their after life.

It is not our purpose, however, to speak in detail of the career of Mendelssohn. In studying his letters or his various biographies, our readers can gain a just estimate of a man who may justly be classed as the most many-sided, the most broadly cultured of all musicians.

He was of rather delicate physique, and yet a most earnest and constant worker. His labors as composer, pianist, director, and as teacher, were unremitting, and unquestionably laid the foundation of the disease which carried him off before he had even reached his prime. Duties of most manifold character were thrust upon him from every side, as his fame grew; and he himself, before his thirty-fifth year, seemed to have lost much of the buoyancy which was a characteristic of his young manhood. At this time, also, a serious cough seems to have set in, which occasioned some alarm to his friends. There is but little doubt that the work upon the oratorio of *Elijah* gave the finishing stroke to the enfeebled health

of Mendelssohn, just as the composition of the *Seasons* is said to have killed Haydn. Most delightful of all the pictures of the later years of Mendelssohn are the moments of domestic happiness and repose which the composer was able to take occasionally, in the country, unharassed by any professional duties. He was a most loving father and husband; and these moments of rest were the most precious of all to him, as may be seen from any of his letters referring to the subject. His teaching in the Conservatory at Leipzig was often a severe trial to his patience; and he often became extremely irritable and nervous, rather a disease than a natural condition with one of Mendelssohn's nature. *Elijah* made a complete and overwhelming success from its very first performance at Birmingham, Aug. 26, 1846. Amid the excitement attending the production and success of the work, Mendelssohn seemed in the very best of spirits and health. This was, however, due rather to excitement than to any normal condition; and it would have been well, had the composer followed the period of exertion with one of rest and recuperation. As it was, he soon began to suffer from severe headaches, and was constantly in the doctor's care. Nevertheless, a London season followed; and a series of concerts and a round of social receptions utterly exhausted him, and he began to look haggard and prematurely old. On his return to Frankfort, he received the news of the sudden death of his beloved sister Fanny. It was too much for

his broken health; and, swooning away, he remained insensible for some time. His nerves, from this time on, were constantly in a weak and harried state; and he was utterly weary. There was as yet no definite disease, but utter exhaustion. He gradually recovered from this, and was even able to apply himself to composition again, although one can readily find a sadder spirit in the music of this epoch than in his other compositions, the male chorus of the "Loreley" being almost the only exception. There were moments of vivacity, but they were only passing moments; and, as a rule, he became dull, slow in his motions, and acted as one very weary.

Yet, as no actual illness had shown itself, his friends did not realize his alarming state; and no apprehensions were felt. He withdrew himself from public performances, and gave his conductor's baton to his friend and co-laborer, Rietz. A trip to Berlin, and a view of his sister's apartments, which had been undisturbed since her death, had the effect of entirely unstringing him, and took away whatever benefit he had gained by preceding rest.

His depression grew greater and greater; and, although at times it would lift and reveal the bright and witty Mendelssohn of years gone by, these gleams were but momentary. On Oct. 9, 1847, he had called at the house of a friend, to consult her about the arrangement of a set of songs. Here, he was attacked with a most severe headache and a severe chill, and on being sent



home, became comatose. An application of leeches resulted in temporary recovery, but it was really the first stroke of apoplexy which he had undergone. On the 28th of the same month, he was so far recovered that he was able to take a walk with his wife. The exertion was too much. On his return, a second shock took place, much more severe than the first. His brain was entirely weakened by this attack; and, now, all felt that the end was near. The house was surrounded by inquiring friends, bulletins were issued, and the newspapers printed frequent reports as to the state of the invalid. The final shock came on November 3rd, and deprived him of consciousness. He lingered until the next day, and died Thursday, Nov. 4, 1847, less than thirty-nine years old. It must strike the reader of these articles that many of the great composers died young. The fire of genius is often a consuming one; and Mozart, Schubert, and Mendelssohn were shrivelled by its flames before they had reached their prime. The world does justice to Mendelssohn in saying that his constant labors destroyed him. When will biographers do the same justice to Mozart and Schubert, whose works have been even more numerous than those of Mendelssohn, and whose lives were fully as short?

## CHAPTER VII.

It must not be supposed by our readers, because Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and other composers died young, that musicians are a short-lived race. Exactly the contrary is true. Cherubini, Rossini, Moscheles, as well as the old masters, Bach, Handel, Haydn, and a host of others, prove that active musical work is not incompatible with longevity. The causes which led to the demise of composers in their early manhood are indirectly to be found in the poverty and adverse circumstances against which they were obliged to struggle. It is also a mistake to suppose that these causes have ceased to exist in the cases of great composers; and the affluence and luxury of such men as Wagner or Liszt are held up as a contrast to the comparative poverty of the older composers, and as a proof that the world to-day recognizes its geniuses. Never was a more mistaken conclusion! It is true that there is a greater demand for musicians among the public in this century than there was in the last (when the composer could exist only by the patronage of princes), but there are still many geniuses who have met the fate of Schubert or of Mozart, even in recent times. Among these may be mentioned Lortzing, Goetz, and Volkmann.

Lortzing was probably the most successful composer of light opera that Germany ever possessed. It may puzzle many readers to understand why, when a com-

poser's works were extremely popular, he should nearly starve to death. The cause, however, is not difficult to find. In Germany, the composer is practically at the mercy of either publisher or manager. The operatic managers constantly took advantage of the poverty of Lortzing, and for fifty or one hundred gulden would purchase the entire right to works which brought them in fortunes. The composer, poor and without resources, was obliged to take whatever was offered, and was completely at the mercy of these tyrants. It is not astonishing, therefore, that, after a precarious existence, Lortzing died in extreme poverty in 1852, aged forty-nine; while his operas were admired throughout all Germany, and had even become known in foreign lands. Had Lortzing had the good fortune to have lived in France instead of in Germany, he might have died a millionaire; for that beneficent country guards its composers from their own improvidence as well as from grasping managers, and secures to them a fixed percentage of the receipts every time one of their works is performed.

Goetz must be added to the list of composers who died before their fortieth year, and whose death was also hastened by the struggle with poverty. Although his opera, *The Taming of the Shrew*, at once became famous, and bids fair to become a permanent addition to the repertoire of standard works, and while his symphony met with favor wherever it was performed, the composer was diligently trying to keep the wolf from the door by

teaching, by leading a vocal society, and by any drudgery that he could obtain. When his symphony was performed in Vienna, the conductor invited the composer to be present. The invitation was declined, because Goetz had not the means to pay his railroad fare to the scene of his triumph. He died in 1876, at Zurich, at the age of thirty-six.

Volkmann, who died only two years ago, was more fortunate in the close of his career; for he lived to see his merit recognized and to hold a leading position in Pesth, Hungary, at the time of his death. Yet the long struggle with fate, the days and nights of severe study in Leipzig, the many privations which he bore while waiting for his work to be recognized, laid the foundation of an illness, which embittered even his triumph and which finally caused his death.

Among the composers who died in the "thirties" must be mentioned Georges Bizet, the composer of *Carmen*, who died suddenly in 1875, at the age of thirty-seven, just three months after his greatest opera had been performed and had achieved a triumph. There is but little doubt that the labor of composing the masterpiece, and the excitement of its production, killed the musician.

Among the strange deaths of composers must be mentioned that of Carl Loewe, the great German composer of *Lieder* and *Balladen*. Loewe may be ranked as the greatest of ballad composers, and his fame was recognized throughout Germany. He had lived many years in

Stettin, where he held positions both in the college and under the municipality, when, in 1864, he had a strange illness, during which he lay in a trance for the space of six weeks. The occasion of so unusual a sickness, and his subsequent recovery from it, have never been fully explained. Finally, in 1869, at the age of seventy-three, he fell into another strange slumber, and, awakening after two days calmly breathed his last. He requested that his heart might be buried by his organ in St. Jacobus Church, in Stettin; and this was done.

Giacomo Meyerbeer presents a vivid contrast to the poverty of many of the operatic composers. Born Sept. 5, 1791, Jacob Liebmann Beer was the son of a wealthy Jewish banker, and began his career under very flattering auspices. The addition of the prefix "Meyer" to the "Beer" occurred later, because of the will of a wealthy relative, who left him a fortune on condition that he would adopt his name in this manner. Of Meyerbeer's works it is surely unnecessary to speak. Whatever the malice of his enemies (led by Wagner, whom he had even befriended in the days of his poverty) may say about him, his originality will forever remain unquestioned; and many wonderful instrumental effects, which the world credits to Wagner or Berlioz, will be found for the first time in the works of Meyerbeer. *L'Africaine* was his last opera, and it was scarcely finished before his last illness came on. On April 27, 1864, he was taken with a sudden prostration, which increased until May 1, when

his daughters were summoned. Their nursing extended only a few hours. On Sunday evening, he was yet natural in manner and speech, and wished his daughters and friends a pleasant "good-night." The next morning, early, his pulse began to grow weaker; and before 6 A. M., he was dead. Meyerbeer had a morbid horror of being buried alive; and he left a sealed paper, to be opened at his death, which was found to contain a command that his body should be allowed to remain on its bed, constantly watched, for four days, although the Hebrew ritual allows but one day between decease and interment. His instructions were scrupulously followed. Six days afterwards, the funeral took place in Paris, and was of a grandeur equal to that accorded to the obsequies of monarchs. Meyerbeer's will showed the charitable impulses which moved his nature during life; for he made numerous bequests for the benefit of musicians, authors, and artists, and proved that he did not forget the necessities of his co-workers.

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#### CHAPTER VIII.

WE cannot more fittingly end the series of our articles upon the death of famous musicians than by giving a description of the last days of the great composer of modern times,—Richard Wagner. The life and death of this master stand out in vivid contrast with the existence of such masters as Schubert or Mozart. Wagner,

in his Parisian days, endured poverty, but all through his later career revelled in a luxury which was princely. His villa of Wahnfried, in Bayreuth, is the finest house in the town; and, wherever Wagner went, he kept up an establishment on the same large basis. His own costumes were of the utmost magnificence; and his letters (which have been published) to the lady who made his dressing-gowns prove how much his mind was taken up with every detail of his costume and surroundings.

In the fall of the year 1882, Wagner went to Venice for a period of repose and recreation. The palace Vendramin-Calergi was engaged for the composer. This is one of the most magnificent buildings of the great city of palaces. Yet, before Wagner's arrival, he caused even more splendor to be added to it. The studio was the object of his especial solicitude. Here, everything that painting and upholstering could do was brought into requisition, to make the room a perfect *sanctum*. The size of the establishment which Wagner maintained may be judged by the following list of the *personnel* of the family:—

Richard Wagner and his wife Cosima;  
His three daughters, Daniela, Eva, and Isolde;  
His only son, Siegfried;  
The governess for the daughters, Signora Corsani;  
Siegfried's tutor, Herr Hausburg;  
The intimate family friend, Baron von Stein.

Valets, cooks, porters, gondoliers, and a retinue of servants completed the list.

How the old masters would have stared to have seen a composer enjoying such ease and luxury! The palace contained twenty-eight rooms, gardens, and a large reception hall. It is almost ludicrous to hear the manner in which some of the master's friends palliate his passion for luxurious surroundings. They say that he absolutely needed to be removed from the hard, prosaic world during the fervor of composition; and the rustle of silks, the feeling of rich and costly laces, the sweet fragrance of expensive perfumes, the sensation of every physical luxury, was necessary for the creation of his pompous and magnificent tone pictures. It is fortunate that the older masters did not need this kind of inspiration, or the Jupiter Symphony of Mozart, the immortal nine of Beethoven, and the C major Symphony by Schubert would never have been written. It is also fortunate that Wagner himself did not begin by needing such costly exaltation; otherwise, the *Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin*, and *Tannhäuser* would not have been produced. These works, which he composed during a period of poverty, real or comparative, are as full of pomp and magnificence as any of those which honored his later and more sybaritical years.

Wagner seems to have felt that *Parsifal* was likely to be his last great work; for he said, soon after its completion, "I shall not write another note." Yet this was rather the result of natural fatigue than of any presentiment; for he was soon occupied in preparing the outlines



for another work, this time upon an Oriental subject.\* Wagner generally composed in the early morning. He arose between five and six o'clock, and it was stringently forbidden for any one to disturb him under any pretext. Generally the work ran on until 10 A. M.

Wagner had the habit, which has also been ascribed to Schumann, of whistling softly while composing; and, generally (as with Gluck), a glass of wine or of brandy was on his work-table before him, and received his occasional attention. At about 10 A. M., his faithful wife came to his room, and gave to him in condensed form the contents of the letters of the morning, the news, etc. Breakfast was generally taken alone. After this followed a walk, or a gondola ride, around the city, in which his wife frequently accompanied him.

It is related of him that once coming to Saint Mark's Place, he heard the band which performs there each day in autumn, give selections from *Lohengrin*. The performance was evidently given as a compliment to himself; but the *tempo* was taken so rapidly that Wagner rushed into a neighboring restaurant, with his hands over his ears, and did not come out until the music had ceased.

After the morning promenade of the composer, he generally returned directly to his palace, where at one o'clock the family united at the dinner table. After the

\* This is the version of the Italian newspapers, from which many details have been gleaned. The German papers assert that he was at work upon investigating Greek music of ancient times.

meal, Wagner generally took a nap. A servant was always stationed in the anteroom during Wagner's sleep, to attend to him, if he should awake and desire any attendance.

A gondola ride followed his awaking. Wagner was very fond of going abroad in his gondola; and, in fact, a more pleasant *siesta* cannot be imagined. The writer of these sketches has often shot along the byways of Venice, hearing not the slightest sound save the melodious call of the gondoliers as they approached a corner, to give warning to any other boats which might be nearing, thus avoiding a collision. It is not alone the two great canals, the Grande and the Giudecca, which have attraction, but more especially the little side canals, which are often quite deserted and utterly silent. These Wagner also loved to explore. In the evening, between seven and eight o'clock, the family were again united at supper, Wagner following the German, not the French, fashion in the order of his meals. After this, the family was gathered in the hall, where one of the daughters generally read aloud. The subjects of the readings were always chosen by Wagner himself, and ranged

• "From grave to gay, from lively to severe,"

but seldom changed from one emotion during a single evening, as they reflected the master's mood for the time being. This ended the day.

It will be seen from the above that the composer's life was not only a very regular one, but that his

domestic existence was exceptionally happy. His first marriage with a beautiful actress, Minna Planer by name, was an unhappy one; and no children were the result of this match. His second marriage with Cosima von Bülow was an entirely happy one. She is the daughter of Franz List, and has inherited much of her father's talent, but not his great personal beauty. In appearance, Madame Wagner was never very prepossessing, being somewhat gaunt and lank; but her eyes are remarkably attractive, and indicate the noble soul within. Her manners and conversation were altogether charming, and her tact and suavity were certainly as great as that of her illustrious father. She was first married to the pianist Von Bülow; but both soon discovered that it was an ill-assorted union, and remedied the false step, without causing each other prolonged pain, by a legal separation, after which the lady was married to Wagner. Never was a nobler, fonder or more self-sacrificing wife. Her whole existence became bound up in her husband, whom she not only loved affectionately, but whose works she revered and whose genius she thoroughly recognized. Wagner, on his side also, understood his artist wife; and the *Siegfried Idyl* well illustrates the affection which he felt for her and his son. The poem with which he dedicates this musical work to them (it was first performed on Madame Wagner's birthday, as a surprise to her) runs as follows:—

Thy sacrifices have shed blessings o'er me,  
And to my work have given noble aim,  
And in the hour of conflict they upbore me,  
Until my labor reached a sturdy frame.

Oft in the land of legends we were dreaming,  
Those legend's which contain the Teuton's fame,  
Until a son upon our lives was beaming,  
Siegfried must be *our* youthful hero's name.

For him and thee in tones I now am praising,  
What thanks for deeds of love could better be,  
Within our souls the grateful song upraising,  
Which in this music I have now set free?

And, in the cadence, I have held united  
Siegfried, our dearly cherished son, and thee;  
And all the harmonies I now am bringing  
But speak the thought which in my heart is ringing.

We shall see how strong this love was in the hour of separation, which was fast approaching; although as yet no one dreamed that the great master was nearing his e. d.

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## CHAPTER IX.

WAGNER himself knew well enough that people called him crabbed and ill-tempered, but excused these qualities on the score of ill-health, saying, "People call me ill-natured, when I am simply sick"; and the autopsy after his death established the fact that his stomach was in a most disturbed condition, causing all the ill-temper attendant upon severe dyspepsia.

Upon his arrival in Venice, although feeling in better health than usual, Wagner chose a family physician; and his choice fell upon one of the ablest German physicians

resident in Italy, Dr. Frederic Keppler, whom he had already known through the introduction of an intimate friend, Princess Hatzfeld.

Dr. Keppler visited the family daily, and soon came to be regarded not only as a physician, but intimate friend. Wagner was one of those semi-invalids who enjoy speaking of their ailments, and gave the doctor daily descriptions of all symptoms, real and imaginary. On the other hand, the composer seldom confided even his serious pains to his loving wife, as she immediately became anxious, and worried about them.

The doctor, however, was one of those sensible physicians who drew the patient's thoughts gradually into more cheerful channels, and gave very little medicine. Dr. Keppler himself says that Wagner was too much given to taking medicines and stimulants indiscriminately for his troubles, and had partially injured his stomach thereby. In this, the composer resembled Beethoven, who has already been described as taking remedies in an impetuous and unsystematic manner. Wagner's family circle, as we have seen, was a large one; and it was soon to receive two additions. The Countess Blandine Gravina, eldest daughter of Cosima Wagner, was coming to Venice, with her young husband; and the newly wedded pair were to take up their abode in the palace.

It will be borne in mind that the three daughters of Cosima von Bülow, before she married Wagner, were constantly with her after her second marriage. The

children of Wagner were two in number,—Eva and Siegfried.

Society the composer did not desire in this his last vacation. Many of the nobility sought the acquaintance of the famous master; but these visitors were always received by Madame Wagner, and their calls were returned, if at all, by the same lady. The only friends, besides those already mentioned, who came in closer contact with Wagner, were Count Bardi; the artists, Schukowsky, Passini and Ruben; and Madame Pinelli, an intimate friend of his wife. Liszt also came in November.

The hours of work grew longer in the winter, and, as usual, were shrouded in a sort of mystery. During Wagner's entire married life, no one but Cosima Wagner was allowed even to enter his study; and the family of the writer of these sketches, who knew Wagner in his younger days, describe the same isolation of labor as a characteristic of his youth.

The early part of December was occupied by a labor of love. Wagner, in his earliest career, had written a work which received the honor of successful performance in the Leipzig Gewandhaus Concerts. The symphony—a large one in four movements, in C major—made a success on its first performance, but was afterwards lost. It was composed in 1832, and its parts were discovered in Dresden nearly a half century later. They were sent to Wagner, and naturally came first into the hands of his faithful secretary, his wife. Cosima Wagner had the separate parts

copied into a score, learned them, and one day seated herself at the piano and began to play the first movement. Wagner sprang up in amazement. "It is my symphony!" he cried. "Where—where has it been found?" After the lapse of nearly a whole lifetime, he at once recognized the work. And now he desired to return the pleasure which his wife had given him. He determined that the work should be performed to her, and to her alone, under his own direction. It was to be performed at the Liceo Benedetto Marcello, the Conservatory of Venice; and Wagner led the rehearsals with all his accustomed vigor. He liked the symphony, and said of it, "Clearness and strength were what I aimed for; and these are in the work, spite of its faults." It may be interesting to read what an eminent critic said of this work at its performance in Leipzig, so long ago, while the composer was an utterly unknown young man. Laube writes: "There is a stout and earnest energy in the thoughts which intertwine in this symphony; a stormy, audacious step, which treads through the work from one end to the other. . . . Great hopes are to be built upon the musical talent of the composer."

The preparations for the concert were somewhat interrupted by an illness in the family, Wagner's daughter Eva being attacked with symptoms of fever. Thanks, however, to Dr. Keppler's prompt and skilful treatment, the malady soon passed by. The next illness in the family was not to be of so slight a nature. Already, the mas-

ter's health showed signs of serious impairment. In his stronger moments, he had often expressed the belief that he would live to ninety years; but, during these months in Venice, he frequently seemed to have almost prophetic presentiments. The fogs of Venice depressed him greatly; and his breathing, on such occasions, pained him severely. He concealed many of these symptoms and melancholy impressions from his family; and even his physician, although aware of the presence of disease, found no organ seriously enough impaired to cause alarm. The occasion of the performance of the symphony was to be the birthday of his wife, and only the family were to be present.

The evening of the performance came at last, and the concert began at nine o'clock. Wagner, Liszt, and the family entered the brilliant hall, and were received by the director of the Conservatory, who greeted the composer with an address of welcome, thanking him for the honor he was about to confer upon the institution. The orchestra burst into loud plaudits, and Wagner took the baton and began. It was the last time that the great conductor led a musical work. It was a strange coincidence that the extremes of his life should thus have met. How many strange thoughts must have filled his mind as the symphony went on! When it was written, he was a youth of less than twenty, struggling for recognition; not yet had he thought of breaking the fetters of operatic form; no art theories and broad



schemes of musical reform had opened upon his mind. And here he stood,—an old man, honored as never musician had been honored before him, conqueror in the greatest fields of composition, leading the work of his own boyhood for the first time. It is no flight of fancy to imagine that he deeply felt this touch of destiny; for, at the close of the work, he exclaimed sadly: "I shall never direct again! I shall never write more! I must soon die! I have felt this long, and now more than ever." The circle of his art life was completed on this occasion. The beginning and the end were with his symphony in C.

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#### CHAPTER X.

THE premonitions of Wagner were, however, soon forgotten; and Christmas Day, 1882, found the family joyously celebrating the feast in true German style. New Year's Day was also ushered in with all merriment and feasting at the Vendramin palace.

Yet Wagner's health was not such as to leave his friends without care. Dr. Keppler came much oftener than usual, although no alarming symptoms of any kind yet showed themselves. Rheumatism tortured the master very frequently; but this, of course, admitted of no real remedy. On the 13th of January, Liszt left his friend, little thinking that he should never see him again. A month later, Wagner was a corpse.

The carnival season, most glorious of all at Rome or Venice, brought so many enjoyments that all the symptoms of illness seemed to vanish in the round of gayety. Only one thing vexed him in these latest days.

The Italians, wishing to honor him, not only kept praising *Rienzi* and *Tannhäuser*, but even once performed selections from the latter opera before him, whereupon the composer at once fled. Wagner, in his later days, seemed to discard all his earlier operas up to *Lohengrin*, and especially disliked *Rienzi*, which was built in the Italian model.

The day after the Carnival, a visit was paid by the composer to San Michele, the Campo Santo, or graveyard, of Venice. After a prolonged stay among the tombs, he said, "Soon, I, too, shall find repose in such a quiet spot." It is idle, however, to seek for a deep presentiment in this remark; for Wagner was always a man of strong moods, and, when sombre, would burst upon his friends with such a remark as "Let us think about death," and would then hear only the gloomiest music or poetry. It may be added that Wagner represented his moods in his dress. If he was in deep red satin, with gold trimmings, he was easily approached, for he was in a good humor; but, if he was in gray, then the visitor did well to avoid him. It was during one of his gray days that the great prima donna, Pauline Lucca, came to Venice to visit him, and was repulsed.

On the day before his death, Wagner awoke in one of his best moods. His stomach had ceased to trouble him, his rheumatism had vanished, and he praised Dr. Keppler heartily, who, he said, had successfully carried him over his little ailments. The family were delighted at this, and particularly his son Siegfried, with whom he had planned a short excursion to Verona on the following day. That day, full of good humor, Wagner went to his banker to get the money for the proposed trip.

In the evening, Dr. Keppler came, and found him seemingly in the best of health and spirits, laughing, joking, and telling one story after another. The very last of these tales was a sneer at the race whom Wagner so bitterly hated,—the Jews.

The 13th of February was a dismal day. It rained in torrents, and the sky was dull and gray. It was impossible to think of making the proposed excursion. Wagner did not feel nearly so well as on the previous day. Nevertheless, he arose at six o'clock, and worked steadily the entire morning. He was engaged in arranging many details regarding the performances of *Parsifal*, which were to take place in the summer of this year. He gave orders, on this day, that he should not be disturbed until two o'clock; and, as we have already intimated, these orders were law to Cosima Wagner. Yet, as he had complained of not feeling so well as usual, his wife took the customary precaution of stationing the

faithful servant, Betty Btirckel, in an antechamber, that she might be notified, if her husband desired anything. The hours passed on. Occasionally, Madame Wagner would step into the anteroom, to inquire of Betty if Wagner had called her; and, on being each time answered that he had not, and that he had been pacing up and down his study in his customary manner, withdrew. At one o'clock, Wagner rang and asked, "Have you ordered my gondola for four o'clock?" and, on being answered in the affirmative, said: "Very good. I will eat in my room to-day. A bowl of soup will do. I do not feel very well."

This was nothing unusual, as Wagner had frequently given orders in a similar manner on his "gray" days. The soup was brought; and, for a time after, all was still in the study.

In a short time, however, Betty heard a hasty pacing to and fro, and, after that, a prolonged fit of coughing. She threw her work aside, and noiselessly approached the door. Soon, she heard a painful groaning; yet so fixed was the discipline regarding Wagner's study that she dared not enter, and was about to call Madame Wagner, when she heard the murmured call, "Betty!" She rushed into the study, where she found the master lying stretched on the sofa, half covered with his fur, and his feet upon a chair. His features seemed frightfully unnatural; and, with much effort, he gasped, "Call my

wife—and—the doctor!" These were his last words. In wildest affright, the servant ran for Madame Wagner, who rushed to the study, and at once saw the danger of the crisis. "The doctor, quick! the doctor! Bring Dr. Keppler!" she cried. Wagner lay unable to speak, but suffering frightfully and groaning continually. His faithful wife held him in her arms. After a vehement spasm of pain, the master seemed to rest easier. His throes grew less violent; and his wife, as she held him, thought that he had sunk into slumber. The slumber was death.

It was fully an hour before Dr. Keppler was found. He finally came hurriedly into the study (It was the first time he had entered the mysterious apartment), and found Madame Wagner holding her husband, whom she supposed to be sleeping, in her arms. She spoke softly to the doctor, fearing to awaken him. Dr. Keppler saw at a glance that this was no slumber. Lifting the body from the widow's arms, he laid it upon the magnificent bed. A hasty examination of pulse and heart followed, and then the terrible news was broken to Madame Wagner, who, uttering a wild cry, fell upon the body senseless. It is not our purpose to go into further details; to describe the heart-rending scene which followed the breaking of the dread news to the children; the awakening of the widow to consciousness, and her inconsolable grief. The illness which so suddenly terminated the career of the composer was disease of the heart. The

honors which attended the funeral were great enough to have been bestowed upon a king, but among these tokens of regret at the death of the Master, was none so noteworthy as the heartfelt sorrow of Cosima Wagner. The writer of these articles was in Bayreuth during the summer of 1883, at the memorial performance of *Parsifal*; and Madame Wagner's sorrow was even then so intense that it was feared her reason was shattered. She refused to see any one. Even her father, Franz Liszt, was not permitted to offer his consolations in person. Scarcely even could her children be admitted to her presence. Siegfried only, the beloved son of Wagner, who is said to resemble his father greatly,\* was occasionally allowed to see the grief-stricken mother. Every day, whatever the weather, she sat an hour by the grave (which is upon Wagner's estate of Wahnfried, in Bayreuth), and was so jealous of the master's resting-place, that the writer with great difficulty only obtained permission to visit the sacred spot. Finally, by constant exertions of the memorial committee, the public were allowed one hour on certain days of the week to make a pilgrimage thither. Even now, the conjugal grief is not altogether stayed; but Cosima Wagner employs her life, as Madame Clara Schumann has done, in superintending the performances

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\* Nevertheless, he has exhibited no great attainments in music, his ruling passion being for the study of architecture.

of works of her husband, and in lending assistance wherever necessary to their success.\*

With the death of Wagner, our series of articles appropriately closes. In studying the last hours of the various composers, we have endeavored to show that their different characters have been in some degree exemplified in their deaths, and that the contrasts which marked their lives, only stand out in sharper colors in the supreme hours which closed them.

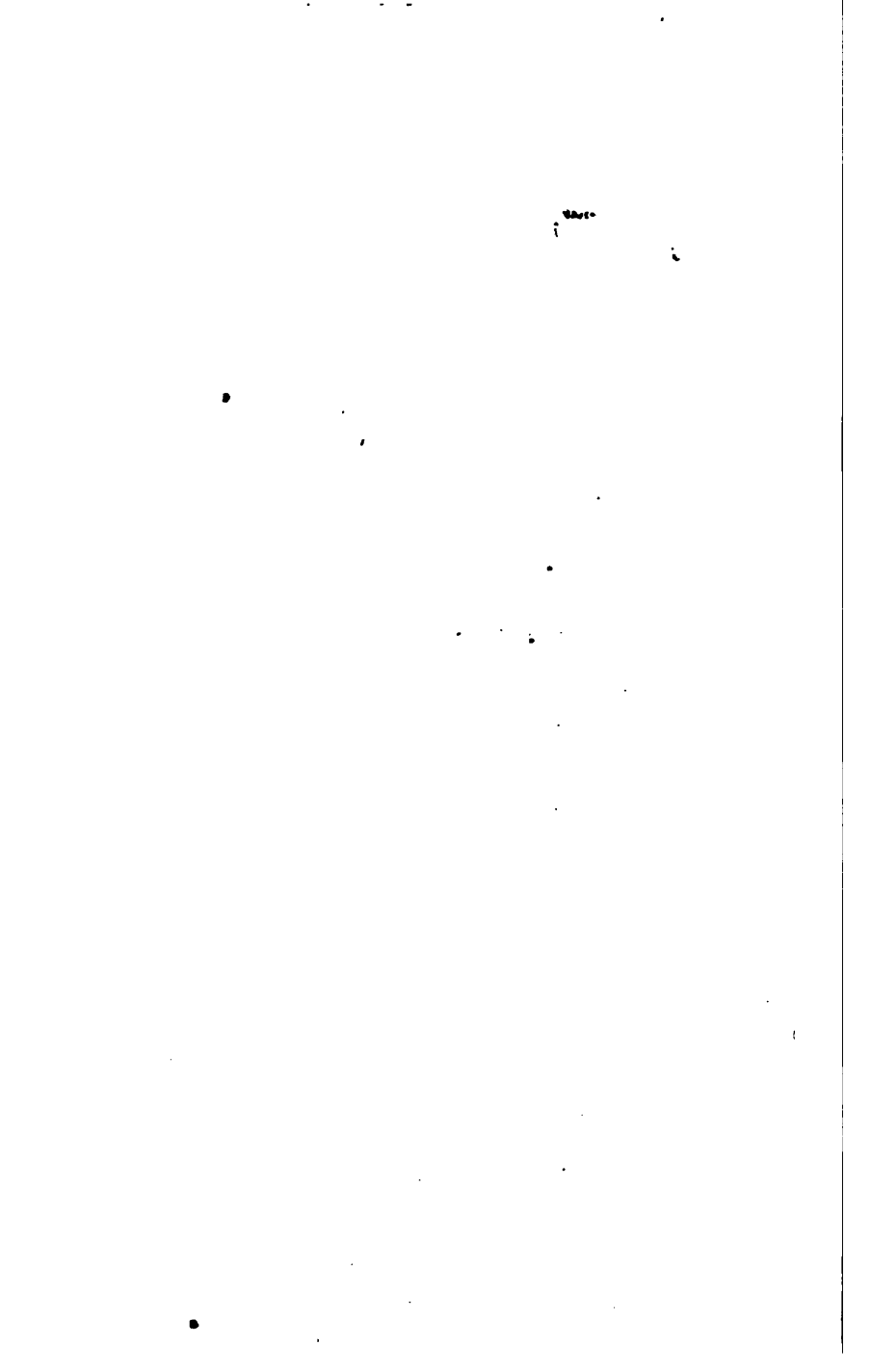
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\* The most touching tribute to the funeral gifts was that given by Cosima Wagner. Her husband had always admired her long and glossy hair. She cut this off, and it was buried with the composer.

[THE END.]







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